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MARROW OF METHODISM

Twelve Sermons

BY THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

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1886

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BY THE

REV. B. GREGORY, D.D.

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Mansfield

THE

MARROW OF METHODISM:

Twelve Sermons

BY THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

June 17, 1703 – Mar. 2, 1791

JESUS CHRIST

This picture is the oldest known, found on a Tomb in the Catacombs.

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1886

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MARROW OF METHODISM:

Twelve Sermons

BY THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

WITH BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS

BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN GREGORY, D.D.

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Introduction.

THE value of Wesley's sermons, as sources of personal "instruction in righteousness," and especially to any one who has anything to do with religious teaching, or "the cure of souls," whether as "separated unto the Gospel of God," as a Local-preacher or as a Class-leader, it is scarcely possible to over-estimate. Yet they are so simple, so severely chaste in language, so unornamented and "plain in neatness," that it is to be feared they are much more praised than read. We know no work so useful in clearing the doubts of believers, and explaining to them their own state. And what security have we that the Methodist pulpit and the Methodist Class-room will retain their power and fulfil their Providential mission unless the characteristic principles of Wesley's teaching be embodied in that of the Preachers and Leaders? Moreover, we cannot fully feel Charles Wesley's hymns if unfamiliar with John Wesley's sermons. It has occurred to us that perhaps the best way of bringing out the instructiveness of these remarkable discourses, would be to show how they supply answers to questions which must be incessantly putting themselves to thoughtful Christians, especially those who have to guide others. We therefore choose twelve sermons as samples of Wesley's teaching. We have appended a few questions, simply for the sake of directing attention to the principal points. It will be especially seen with what wonderful clearness and precision the true *Doctrines of Grace* are presented in Wesley's standard sermons.

THE EDITOR.

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Introduction

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SERMONS.

SALVATION BY FAITH:

PREACHED AT

ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

ON JUNE 18, 1738.

"*By grace are ye saved through faith.*"—EPH. ii. 8.

ALL the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of His mere grace, bounty, or favour; His free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of His mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul," and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand. "All our works, thou, O God, hast wrought in us." These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: and whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? With his own works? No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own, but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; being "come short of the glory of

God," the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God.

3. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is "grace upon grace!" If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" And thus it is. Herein "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died" to save us. "By grace" then "are ye saved through faith." Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire,

I. WHAT FAITH IT IS THROUGH WHICH WE ARE SAVED.
II. WHAT IS THE SALVATION WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH.
III. HOW WE MAY ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS.

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

1. And, first, it is not barely the faith of a Heathen.

Now, God requireth of a Heathen to believe, "that God is; that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him;" and that He is to be sought by glorifying Him as God, by giving Him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth, toward their fellow-creatures. A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a Heathen.

2. Nor, secondly, is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a Heathen. For the devil believes, not only that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish; but also, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, "I know Thee who Thou art; the

Holy One of God." (Luke iv. 34.) Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words which came out of the mouth of the Holy One; yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old, of two of whom he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto you the way of salvation." Thus much, then, the great enemy of God and man believes, and trembles in believing,—that God was made manifest in the flesh; that He will "tread all enemies under His feet;" and that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God." Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.

3. Thirdly. The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on Him as to "leave all and follow Him;" although they had then power to work miracles, to "heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;" yea, they had then "power and authority over all devils;" and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to "preach the kingdom of God."

4. What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it. Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern Heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this, it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of His death, and the power of His resurrection. It acknowledges His death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and His resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and

immortality; inasmuch as He "was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole Gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, *as given for us*, and *living in us*; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with Him, and cleaving to Him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or, in one word, our salvation.

II. What salvation it is, which is through this faith, is the second thing to be considered.

1. And, first, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, *Ye shall be*, (though that also is true,) but, "*Ye are saved* through faith."

2. *Ye are saved* (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought His First-begotten into the world: "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." And neither here, nor in other parts of holy writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All His people, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "all that believe in Him," He will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin, "of the flesh and of the spirit." Through faith that is in Him, they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First, from the guilt of all past sin: for, whereas all the world is guilty before God, insomuch that should He "be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none that could abide it;" and whereas, "by the law is" only "the knowledge of sin," but no deliverance from it, so that, "by" fulfilling "the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in His sight;" now, "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe."

Now, "they are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past." Now hath Christ taken away "the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He hath "blotted out the handwriting that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." "There is therefore no condemnation now to them which" believe "in Christ Jesus."

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe master, but as an indulgent Father. "They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises. Thus have they "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them." And hereby they are persuaded, (though perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fulness of persuasion,) that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. Again: through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." (1 John iii. 5, &c.) Again: "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth

in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Once more: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 John v. 18.)

6. He that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not, (1.) By any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning: but sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor, (2.) By any wilful sin; for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor, (3.) By any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God; and any tendency to an unholy desire, he by the grace of God, stifleth in the birth. Nor, (4.) Doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin:" and though he cannot say, he hath not sinned, yet now "he sinneth not."

7. This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification*; which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on Him, and a deliverance from the power of sin, through Christ *formed in his heart*. So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again*. He is *born again of the Spirit* unto a new life, which "is hid with Christ in God." And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the ἀδολον, "*sincere* milk of the word, and grows thereby;" going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until at length, he come unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

III. The first usual objection to this is,

1. That to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake,

as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness."

2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St. Paul's time: for even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the law through faith?" We answer, first, all who preach not faith do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text; or, indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, secondly, "we establish the law," both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way, whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them." These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which He hath appointed, do all the "good works which He had before prepared that they should walk therein," and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

3. But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride? We answer, Accidentally it may: therefore ought every believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle, "Because of unbelief," the first branches "were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St. Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection, (Rom. iii. 27,) "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory. But there is no glorying for him "that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." (Rom. iv. 5.) To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text

(Eph. ii. 4, &c.:) "God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) that He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "it is the gift of God;" the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation which He of His own good pleasure, His mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of His grace; that believing ye are saved, another. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation; so far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe; for it is then God that worketh in us: and, therefore, that He giveth us a reward for what He Himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of His mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin? Indeed, it may and will: many will "continue in sin that grace may abound;" but their blood is upon their own head. The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance; and so it will those who are sincere of heart. When they know there is yet forgiveness with Him, they will cry aloud that He would blot out their sins also, through faith which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not; if they seek Him in all the means He hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till He come; "He will come, and will not tarry." And He can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples, in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's working this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailer repented, believed, and was baptized; as were three thousand, by St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed

at his first preaching. And, blessed be God, there are now many living proofs that He is still "mighty to save."

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair." True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits, or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. He that "goeth about to establish his own righteousness" cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness which is of faith cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.

6. But this, it is said, is an uncomfortable doctrine. The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is "very full of comfort," to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That "whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed: that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him:" here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all? For Zaccheus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say, "Then I, even I, may hope for mercy!" And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps He may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more; yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God." O glad tidings! tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: come ye, and buy, without money and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red like crimson," though more than the hairs of your head, "return ye unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told, that salvation by faith only ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached to all. But

what saith the Holy Ghost? "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." So then, that "whosoever believeth on Him shall be saved," is, and must be, the foundation of all our preaching; that is, must be preached first. "Well, but not to all." To whom then are we not to preach it? Whom shall we except? The poor? Nay; they have a peculiar right to have the Gospel preached unto them. The unlearned? No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young? By no means. "Suffer these," in anywise, to come unto Christ, "and forbid them not." The sinners? Least of all. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing; yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, "Go and preach the Gospel to every creature." If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, "as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak."

8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that "by grace are ye saved through faith:" because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls *the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion*, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms; and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath "overspread the land as a flood." Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop? Then you may reform us by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the "righteousness which is of God by faith" be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who "glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them." They can talk as sublimely

of the law, as he that hath it written by God in his heart. To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God: but take them out of the law into the Gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, "the end of the law to everyone that believeth;" and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether, Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition; as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

9. For this reason the adversary so rages whenever "salvation by faith" is declared to the world: for this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright Martin Luther from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, "How would it enrage a proud strong man armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand!" especially, when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him, and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath Thy strength been ever "made perfect in weakness!" Go forth then, thou little child that believest in Him, and His "right hand shall teach thee terrible things!" Though thou be as helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him, and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy salvation, "conquering and to conquer," until all thine enemies are destroyed, and "death is swallowed up in victory."

Now, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen.

From what besides the faith of a Heathen and the faith of devils does Wesley make saving faith to differ?

It "is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth."

In what respects does it differ from that of the Apostles during the life-time of Christ on earth?

It is "a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, as *given for us*, and *living in us*," etc.—SEC. I. 5.

Is this an instructive and important distinction?

Highly so.

What does Wesley describe saving faith to be?

"A *closing with* Him and *cleaving to* Him," etc.—SEC. I. 5.

Is saving faith, then, an act only, or also a habit?

It is first the one, and then the other.—*Ibid.*

How does Wesley prove salvation to be *present* and perfect?

See SEC. II. 1, 2.

What is his experimental exposition of the perseverance of the saints?

"They are saved from the fear, though not from the possibility of falling," etc.

What is the special historical interest of this sermon?

See Title.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.

"*Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

"*But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)*

"*Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*

"*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.*"—ROMANS x. 5—8.

THE Apostle does not here oppose the covenant given by Moses, to the covenant given by Christ. If we ever imagined this, it was for want of observing, that the latter as well as the former part of these words were spoken by Moses himself to the people of Israel, and that concerning the covenant which then was. (Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 14.) But it is the covenant of grace, which God, through Christ, hath established with men in all ages, (as well before and under the Jewish dispensation, as since God was manifest in the flesh,) which St. Paul here opposes to the covenant of works, made with Adam while in paradise, but commonly supposed to be the only covenant which God had made with man, particularly by those Jews of whom the Apostle writes.

2. Of these it was that he so affectionately speaks in the beginning of this chapter: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness," (of the justification that flows from His mere grace and mercy, freely forgiving our sins through

the Son of His love, through the redemption which is in Jesus,) "and seeking to establish their own righteousness," (their own holiness, antecedent to faith in "Him that justifieth the ungodly," as the ground of their pardon and acceptance,) "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," and consequently, seek death in the error of their life.

3. They were ignorant that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;"—that, by the oblation of Himself once offered, He had put an end to the first law or covenant, (which, indeed, was not given by God to Moses, but to Adam in his state of innocence,) the strict tenor whereof, without any abatement, was, "Do this, and live;" and, at the same time, purchased for us that better covenant, "Believe, and live;" believe, and thou shalt be saved; now saved, both from the guilt and power of sin, and, of consequence, from the wages of it.

4. And how many are equally ignorant now, even among those who are called by the name of Christ! How many who have now "a zeal for God," yet have it not "according to knowledge;" but are still seeking "to establish their own righteousness," as the ground of their pardon and acceptance; and therefore vehemently refuse to "submit themselves unto the righteousness of God!" Surely my heart's desire, and prayer to God for you, brethren, is, that ye may be saved. And, in order to remove this grand stumbling-block out of your way, I will endeavour to show, first, what the righteousness *is* which is of the law; and what "the righteousness which is of faith;" secondly, the folly of trusting in the righteousness of the law, and the wisdom of submitting to that which is of faith.

I. 1. And, first, "the righteousness which is of the law saith, The man which doeth these things shall live by them." Constantly and perfectly observe all these things to do them, and then thou shalt live for ever. This law, or covenant, (usually called the covenant of works,) given by God to man in paradise, required an obedience perfect in all its parts,

entire and wanting nothing, as the condition of his eternal continuance in the holiness and happiness wherein he was created.

2. It required that man should fulfil all righteousness, inward and outward, negative and positive: that he should not only abstain from every idle word, and avoid every evil work, but should keep every affection, every desire, every thought, in obedience to the will of God: that he should continue holy as He which had created him was holy, both in heart, and in all manner of conversation: that he should be pure in heart, even as God is pure; perfect as his Father in heaven was perfect: that he should love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength; that he should love every soul which God had made, even as God had loved him: that by this universal benevolence, he should dwell in God, (who is love,) and God in him: that he should serve the Lord his God with all his strength, and in all things singly aim at His glory.

3. These were the things which the righteousness of the law required, that he who did them might live thereby. But it farther required, that this entire obedience to God, this inward and outward holiness, this conformity both of heart and life to His will, should be perfect in *degree*. No abatement, no allowance could possibly be made, for falling short in any degree, as to any jot or tittle, either of the outward or the inward law. If every commandment relating to outward things was obeyed, yet that was not sufficient, unless every one was obeyed with all the strength, in the highest measure, and most perfect manner. Nor did it answer the demand of this covenant, to love God with every power and faculty, unless He were loved with the full capacity of each, with the whole possibility of the soul.

4. One thing more was indispensably required by the righteousness of the law, namely, that this universal obedience, this perfect holiness both of heart and life, should be perfectly uninterrupted also, should continue without any intermission, from the moment wherein God created man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, until the

days of his trial should be ended, and he should be confirmed in life everlasting.

5. The righteousness, then, which is of the law, speaketh on this wise: "Thou, O man of God, stand fast in love, in the image of God wherein thou art made. If thou wilt remain in life, keep the commandments, which are now written in thy heart. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Love, as thyself, every soul that He hath made. Desire nothing but God. Aim at God in every thought, in every word and work. Swerve not in one motion of body or soul, from Him, thy mark, and the prize of thy high calling; and let all that is in thee praise His holy name, every power and faculty of thy soul, in every kind, in every degree, and at every moment of thine existence. 'This do, and thou shalt live:' thy light shall shine, thy love shall flame, more and more, till thou art received up into the house of God in the heavens, to reign with Him for ever and ever."

6. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring down Christ from above;" (as though it were some impossible task which God required thee previously to perform, in order to thine acceptance;) "or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ from the dead;" (as though that were still remaining to be done, for the sake of which thou wert to be accepted;) "but what saith it? The word," according to the tenor of which thou mayest now be accepted as an heir of life eternal, "is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach,"—the new covenant which God hath now established with sinful man through Christ Jesus.

7. By "the righteousness which is of faith" is meant, that condition of justification (and, in consequence, of present and final salvation, if we endure therein unto the end) which was given by God to *fallen man*, through the merits and mediation of His only-begotten Son. This was in part revealed to Adam, soon after his fall; being contained in the original promise, made to him, and his seed, concerning

the Seed of the woman, who should "bruise the serpent's head." (Gen. iii. 15.) It was a little more clearly revealed to Abraham, by the Angel of God from heaven, saying, "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in thy Seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed." (Gen. xxii. 16, 18.) It was yet more fully made known to Moses, to David, and to the Prophets that followed; and, through them, to many of the people of God in their respective generations. But still the bulk even of these were ignorant of it; and very few understood it clearly. Still "life and immortality" were not so "brought to light" to the Jews of old, as they are now unto us "by the Gospel."

8. Now this covenant saith not to sinful man, "Perform unsinning obedience, and live." If this were the term, he would have no more benefit by all which Christ hath done and suffered for him, than if he was required, in order to life, to "ascend into heaven, and bring down Christ from above;" or to "descend into the deep," into the invisible world, and "bring up Christ from the dead." It doth not require any impossibility to be done: (although, to mere man, what it requires would be impossible; but not to man assisted by the Spirit of God:) this were only to mock human weakness. Indeed, strictly speaking, the covenant of *grace* doth not require us to *do* anything at all, as absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to our justification; but only to *believe* in Him who, for the sake of His Son, and the propitiation which He hath made, "justifieth the ungodly that worketh not," and imputes His faith to him for righteousness. Even so Abraham "believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. xv. 6.) "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith,—that he might be the father of all them that believe,—that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." (Rom. iv. 11.) "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it," *i.e.*, faith, "was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed," to whom faith shall be imputed for righteousness, shall stand in the stead of perfect obedience, in order to our acceptance with God, "if we believe on Him who raised up

Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered" to death "for our offences, and was raised again for our justification:" (Rom. iv. 23—25:) for the assurance of the remission of our sins, and of a second life to come, to them that believe.

9. What saith then the covenant of forgiveness, of unmerited love, of pardoning mercy? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In the day thou believest, thou shalt surely live. Thou shalt be restored to the favour of God; and in His pleasure is life. Thou shalt be saved from the curse, and from the wrath of God. Thou shalt be quickened from the death of sin into the life of righteousness. And if thou endure to the end, believing in Jesus, thou shalt never taste the second death; but, having suffered with thy Lord, shalt also live and reign with Him for ever and ever.

10. Now "this word is nigh thee." This condition of life is plain, easy, always at hand. "It is in thy mouth, and in thy heart," through the operation of the Spirit of God. The moment "thou believest in thine heart" in Him whom God "hath raised from the dead," and "confessest with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," as *thy* Lord and *thy* God, "thou shalt be saved" from condemnation, from the guilt and punishment of thy former sins, and shalt have power to serve God in true holiness all the remaining days of thy life.

11. What is the difference then between the "righteousness which is of the law," and the "righteousness which is of faith?" between the first covenant, or the covenant of works, and the second, the covenant of grace? The essential, unchangeable difference is this: the one supposes him to whom it is given, to be already holy and happy, created in the image and enjoying the favour of God; and prescribes the condition whereon he may continue therein, in love and joy, life and immortality: the other supposes him to whom it is given, to be now unholy and unhappy, fallen short of the glorious image of God, having the wrath of God abiding on him, and hastening, through sin, whereby his soul is dead, to bodily death, and death everlasting; and to man in this state it prescribes the condition whereon he may regain the pearl he has lost, may recover the favour and image of God, may retrieve

the life of God in his soul, and be restored to the knowledge and the love of God, which is the beginning of life eternal.

12. Again: the covenant of works, in order to man's *continuance* in the favour of God, in His knowledge and love, in holiness and happiness, required of perfect man a *perfect* and uninterrupted *obedience* to every point of the law of God. Whereas, the covenant of grace, in order to man's *recovery* of the favour and the life of God, requires only *faith;* living faith in Him who, through God, justifies him that obeyed not.

13. Yet, again: the covenant of works required of Adam, and all his children, to pay the price themselves, in consideration of which they were to receive all the future blessings of God. But in the covenant of grace, seeing we have nothing to pay, God "frankly forgives us all:" provided only, that we believe in Him who hath paid the price for us; who hath given Himself a "propitiation for our sins, for the sins of the whole world."

14. Thus the first covenant required what is now *afar off* from all the children of men; namely, unsinning obedience, which is far from those who are "conceived and born in sin." Whereas, the second requires what is nigh at hand; as though it should say, "Thou art sin! God is love! Thou by sin art fallen short of the glory of God; yet there is mercy with Him. Bring then all thy sins to the pardoning God, and they shall vanish away as a cloud. If thou wert not ungodly, there would be no room for Him to justify thee as ungodly. But now draw near, in full assurance of faith. He speaketh, and it is done. Fear not, only believe; for even the just God justifieth all that believe in Jesus."

II. 1. These things considered, it would be easy to show as I proposed to do in the second place, the folly of trusting in the "righteousness which is of the law," and the wisdom of submitting to the "righteousness which is of faith."

The folly of those who still trust in the "righteousness which is of the law," the terms of which are, "Do this, and live," may abundantly appear from hence: they set out wrong; their very first step is a fundamental mistake: for,

before they can ever think of claiming any blessing on the terms of this covenant, they must suppose themselves to be in his state with whom this covenant was made. But how vain a supposition is this; since it was made with Adam in a state of innocence! How weak, therefore, must that whole building be, which stands on such a foundation! And how foolish are they who thus build on the sand; who seem never to have considered, that the covenant of works was not given to man when he was "dead in trespasses and sin," but when he was alive to God, when he knew no sin, but was holy as God is holy; who forget, that it was never designed for the *recovery* of the favour and life of God once lost, but only for the *continuance* and increase thereof, till it should be complete in life everlasting.

2. Neither do they consider, who are thus seeking to establish their "own righteousness, which is of the law," what manner of obedience or righteousness that is which the law indispensably requires. It must be perfect and entire in every point, or it answers not the demand of the law. But which of you is able to perform such obedience? or, consequently, to live thereby? Who among you fulfils every jot and tittle even of the outward commandments of God? doing nothing, great or small, which God forbids? leaving nothing undone which He enjoins? speaking no *idle word*? having your conversation always "meet to minister grace to the hearers?" and "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, doing all to the glory of God?" And how much less are you able to fulfil all the inward commandments of God; those which require, that every temper and motion of your soul should be holiness unto the Lord! Are you able to "love God with all your heart?" to love all mankind as your own soul? to "pray without ceasing? in every thing to give thanks?" to have God always before you? and to keep every affection, desire, and thought, in obedience to His law?

3. You should farther consider, that the righteousness of the law requires, not only the obeying every command of God, negative and positive, internal and external, but likewise in the perfect degree. In every instance whatever, the voice

of the law is, "Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy strength." It allows no abatement of any kind: it excuses no defect: it condemns every coming short of the full measure of obedience, and immediately pronounces a curse on the offender: it regards only the invariable rules of justice, and saith, "I know not to show mercy."

4. Who then can appear before such a Judge, who is "extreme to mark what is done amiss?" How weak are they who desire to be tried at the bar where "no flesh living can be justified!"—none of the offspring of Adam. For, suppose we did now keep every commandment with all our strength; yet one single breach, which ever was, utterly destroys our whole claim to life. If we have ever offended in any one point, this righteousness is at an end. For the law condemns all who do not perform uninterrupted as well as perfect obedience. So that, according to the sentence of this, for him who hath once sinned, in any degree, "there remaineth only a fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" of God.

5. Is it not then the very foolishness of folly, for fallen man to seek life by this righteousness? for man, who was "shapen in wickedness, and in sin did his mother conceive him?" man, who is, by nature, all "earthly, sensual, devilish;" altogether "corrupt and abominable;" in whom, till he find grace, "dwelleth no good thing;" nay, who cannot of himself think one good thought; who is indeed all sin, a mere lump of ungodliness, and who commits sin in every breath he draws; whose actual transgressions, in word and deed, are more in number than the hairs of his head? What stupidity, what senselessness, must it be for such an unclean, guilty, helpless worm as this, to dream of seeking acceptance by his own righteousness, of living by "the righteousness which is of the law!"

6. Now, whatsoever considerations prove the folly of trusting in the "righteousness which of the law," prove equally the wisdom of submitting to the "righteousness which is of God by faith." This were easy to be shown with regard to each of the preceding considerations. But, to

wave this, the wisdom of the first step hereto, the disclaiming our own righteousness, plainly appears from hence, that it is acting according to truth, to the real nature of things. For, what is it more, than to acknowledge with our heart as well as lips, the true state wherein we are? to acknowledge, that we bring with us into the world a corrupt, sinful nature; more corrupt, indeed, than we can easily conceive, or find words to express? that hereby we are prone to all that is evil, and averse from all that is good: that we are full of pride, self-will, unruly passions, foolish desires, vile and inordinate affections; lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? that our lives have been no better than our hearts, but many ways ungodly and unholy; insomuch that our actual sins, both in word and deed, have been as the stars of heaven for multitude; that, on all these accounts, we are displeasing to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and deserve nothing from Him but indignation and wrath and death, the due wages of sin? that we cannot, by any of our righteousness, (for indeed we have none at all,) nor by any of our works, (for they are as the tree upon which they grow,) appease the wrath of God, or avert the punishment we have justly deserved; yea, that, if left to ourselves, we shall only wax worse and worse, sink deeper and deeper into sin, offend God more and more, both with our evil works, and with the evil tempers of our carnal mind, till we fill up the measure of our iniquities, and bring upon ourselves swift destruction? And is not this the very state wherein by nature we are? To acknowledge this, then, both with our heart and lips, that is, to disclaim our own righteousness, "the righteousness which is of the law," is to act according to the real nature of things, and, consequently, is an instance of true wisdom.

7. The wisdom of submitting to "the righteousness of faith" appears farther, from this consideration, that it is the righteousness of God: I mean here, it is that method of reconciliation with God which hath been chosen and established by God Himself, not only as He is the God of wisdom, but as He is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth,

and of every creature which He hath made. Now, as it is not meet for man to say unto God, "What doest Thou?"—as none, who is not utterly void of understanding, will contend with One that is mightier than he, with Him whose kingdom ruleth over all: so it is true wisdom, it is a mark of sound understanding, to acquiesce in whatever He hath chosen; to say in this, as in all things, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

8. It may be farther considered, that it was of mere grace, of free love, of undeserved mercy, that God hath vouchsafed to sinful man any way of reconciliation with Himself; that we were not cut away from His hand, and utterly blotted out of His remembrance. Therefore, whatever method He is pleased to appoint, of His tender mercy, of His unmerited goodness, whereby His enemies, who have so deeply revolted from Him, so long and obstinately rebelled against Him, may still find favour in His sight, it is doubtless our wisdom to accept it with all thankfulness.

9. To mention but one consideration more. It is wisdom to aim at the best end by the best means. Now the best end which any creature can pursue is, happiness in God. And the best end a fallen creature can pursue is, the recovery of the favour and image of God. But the best, indeed the only means under heaven given to a man, whereby he may regain the favour of God, which is better than life itself, or the image of God, which is the true life of the soul, is the submitting to the "righteousness which is of faith," the believing in the only-begotten Son of God.

III. 1. Whosoever therefore thou art, who desirest to be forgiven and reconciled to the favour of God, do not say in thy heart, "I must *first do this;* I must *first* conquer every sin; break off every evil word and work, and do all good to all men; or, I must *first* go to church, receive the Lord's supper, hear more sermons, and say more prayers." Alas, my brother! thou art clean gone out of the way. Thou art still "ignorant of the righteousness of God," and art "seeking to establish thy own righteousness," as the ground of thy

reconciliation. Knowest thou not, that thou canst do nothing but sin, till thou art reconciled to God? Wherefore, then, dost thou say, "I must do this and this *first*, and then I shall believe?" Nay, but *first believe!* Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the propitiation for thy sins. Let this good foundation first be laid, and then thou shalt do all things well.

2. Neither say in thy heart, "I cannot be accepted yet, because I am not *good enough*." Who is *good enough*, who ever was, to merit acceptance at God's hands? Was ever any child of Adam *good enough* for this? or will any till the consummation of all things? And, as for thee, thou art not good at all: there dwelleth in thee no good thing. And thou never wilt be, till thou believe in Jesus. Rather thou wilt find thyself worse and worse. But is there any need of being worse, in order to be accepted? Art thou not *bad enough* already? Indeed thou art; and that God knoweth. And thou thyself canst not deny it. Then delay not. All things are now ready. "Arise, and wash away thy sins." The fountain is open. Now is the time to wash thee white in the blood of the Lamb. Now He shall "purge" thee as "with hyssop," and thou shalt "be clean:" He shall "wash" thee, and thou shalt "be whiter than snow."

3. Do not say, "But I am not *contrite enough*: I am not *sensible enough* of my sins." I know it. I would to God thou wert more *sensible* of them, more *contrite* a thousand-fold than thou art. But do not stay for this. It may be, God will make thee so, not before thou believest, but by believing. It may be, thou wilt not weep much, till thou lovest much because thou hast had much forgiven. In the mean time look unto Jesus. Behold, how He loveth thee! What could He have done more for thee which He hath not done?

"O Lamb of God, was ever pain,
Was ever love like Thine?"

Look steadily upon Him, till He looks on thee, and breaks thy hard heart. Then shall thy "head" be "waters," and thy "eyes fountains of tears."

4. Nor yet do thou say, "I must *do* something more *before*

I come to Christ." I grant, supposing thy Lord should delay His coming, it were meet and right to wait for His appearing, in doing, so far as thou hast power, whatsoever He hath commanded thee. But there is no necessity for making such a supposition. How knowest thou that He will delay? Perhaps He will appear, as the dayspring from on high, before the morning light. O do not set Him a time! Expect Him every hour. Now He is nigh! even at the door!

5. And to what end wouldest thou wait for *more sincerity before* thy sins are blotted out? To make thee more worthy of the grace of God? Alas, thou art still "establishing thy own righteousness." He will have mercy, not because thou art worthy of it, but because His compassions fail not; not because thou art righteous, but because Jesus Christ hath atoned for thy sins.

Again: if there be anything good in *sincerity*, why dost thou expect it *before* thou hast faith?—seeing faith itself is the only root of whatever is really good and holy.

Above all, how long wilt thou forget, that whatsoever thou doest, or whatsoever thou hast, before thy sins are forgiven thee, it avails nothing with God toward the procuring of thy forgiveness! yea, and that it must all be cast behind thy back, trampled under foot, made no account of, or thou wilt never find favour in God's sight; because, until then, thou canst not ask it as a mere sinner, guilty, lost, undone, having nothing to plead, nothing to offer to God, but only the merits of His well-beloved Son, "who loved *thee*, and gave Himself for *thee!*"

6. To conclude. Whosoever thou art, O man, who hast the sentence of death in thyself, who feelest thyself a condemned sinner, and hast the wrath of God abiding on thee: unto thee saith the Lord, not, "Do this,"—perfectly obey all My commands,—"and live;" but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "The word of faith is nigh unto thee:" now, at this instant, in the present moment, and in thy present state, sinner as thou art, just as thou art, believe the Gospel; and "I will be merciful unto *thy* unrighteousness, and *thy* iniquities will I remember no more."

How does Wesley show that under the Mosaic dispensation there was a large element of grace?

See SEC. I. 1.

How does he explain the words: "Who shall ascend," etc., and "Who shall descend," etc.?

See SEC. I. 6.

How does he demonstrate the folly of trusting in the righteousness of the law?

See SEC. II. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

How does he prove the wisdom of submitting to the righteousness of faith?

See SEC. II. 6, 7.

What is the proper answer to the penitent's objection, "I am not contrite enough."

See SEC. III. 3.

What is the answer to "I fear I am not quite sincere"?

See SEC. III. 5.

What advice should be given to a penitent in the event of the delay of a sense of pardon?

See SEC. III. 4.

Which of our hymns forms a striking and animated comment on this text and application of this discourse?

Hymn 192.

THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM.

"*The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.*" MARK i. 15.

THESE words naturally lead us to consider, first, the nature of true religion, here termed by our Lord, "the kingdom of God," which, saith He, "is at hand;" and, secondly, the way thereto, which He points out in those words, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."

I. 1. We are, first, to consider the nature of true religion, here termed by our Lord, "the kingdom of God." The same expression the great Apostle uses in his Epistle to the Romans, where he likewise explains his Lord's words, saying, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.)

2. "The kingdom of God," or true religion, "is not meat and drink." It is well known, that not only the unconverted Jews, but great numbers of those who had received the faith of Christ, were, notwithstanding, "zealous of the law," (Acts xxi. 20,) even the ceremonial law of Moses. Whatsoever, therefore, they found written therein, either concerning meat and drink offerings, or the distinction between clean and unclean meats, they not only observed themselves, but vehemently pressed the same, even on those "among the Gentiles" (or Heathens) "who were turned to God;" yea, to such a degree, that some of them taught, wheresoever they came among them, "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law," (the whole ritual law,) "ye cannot be saved." (Acts xv. 1, 24.)

3. In opposition to these, the Apostle declares, both here and in many other places, that true religion does not consist

in *meat* and *drink*, or in any ritual observances; nor, indeed, in any outward thing whatever; in anything exterior to the heart; the whole substance thereof lying in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

4. Not in any *outward thing;* such as *forms or ceremonies*, even of the most excellent kind. Supposing these to be ever so decent and significant, ever so expressive of inward things: supposing them ever so helpful, not only to the vulgar, whose thought reaches little farther than their sight; but even to men of understanding, men of stronger capacities, as doubtless they may sometimes be; yea, supposing them, as in the case of the Jews, to be appointed by God Himself; yet even during the period of time wherein that appointment remains in force, true religion does not principally consist therein; nay, strictly speaking, not at all. How much more must this hold concerning such rites and forms as are only of human appointment! The religion of Christ rises infinitely higher, and lies immensely deeper, than all these. These are good in their place; just so far as they are in fact subservient to true religion. And it were superstition to object against them, while they are applied only as occasional helps to human weakness. But let no man carry them farther. Let no man dream that they have any intrinsic worth; or that religion cannot subsist without them. This were to make them an abomination to the Lord.

5. The nature of religion is so far from consisting in these, in forms of worship, or rites and ceremonies, that it does not properly consist in any outward actions, of what kind soever. It is true, a man cannot have any religion who is guilty of vicious, immoral actions; or who does to others what he would not they should do unto him, if he were in the same circumstances. And it is also true, that he can have no real religion who "knows to do good, and doeth it not." Yet may a man both abstain from outward evil, and do good, and still have no religion. Yea, two persons may do the same outward work; suppose feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked; and, in the mean time, one of these may be truly religious, and the other have no religion at all: for the one may act

from the love of God, and the other from the love of praise. So manifest it is, that although true religion naturally leads to every good word and work, yet the real nature thereof lies deeper still, even in "the hidden man of the heart."

6. I say of *the heart*. For neither does religion consist in orthodoxy, or right opinions; which, although they are not properly outward things, are not in the heart, but the understanding. A man may be orthodox in every point; he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them against all opposers; he may think justly concerning the incarnation of our Lord, concerning the ever-blessed Trinity, and every other doctrine contained in the oracles of God; he may assent to all the three Creeds,—that called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian; and yet it is possible he may have no religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or Pagan. He may be almost as orthodox—as the devil, (though indeed not altogether; for every man errs in something; whereas we cannot well conceive him to hold any erroneous opinion,) and may, all the while, be as great a stranger as he to the religion of the heart.

7. This alone is religion, truly so called: this alone is in the sight of God of great price. The Apostle sums it all up in three particulars, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And, first, *righteousness*. We cannot be at a loss concerning this, if we remember the words of our Lord, describing the two grand branches thereof, on which "hang all the Law and the Prophets:" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment;" (Mark xii. 30;) the first and great branch of Christian righteousness. Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord thy God; thou shalt seek and find all happiness in Him. He shall be "thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," in time and in eternity. All thy bones shall say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Thou shalt hear and fulfil His word, who saith, "My son, give Me thy heart." And, having given Him thy heart, thy inmost soul, to reign

there without a rival, thou mayest well cry out, in the fulness of thy heart, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my strong rock, and my defence; my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge."

8. And the second commandment is like unto this; the second great branch of Christian righteousness is closely and inseparably connected therewith; even, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." *Thou shalt love,*—Thou shalt embrace with the most tender good-will, the most earnest and cordial affection, the most inflamed desires of preventing or removing all evil, and of procuring for him every possible good. *Thy neighbour,*—that is, not only thy friend, thy kinsman, or thy acquaintance; not only the virtuous, the friendly, him that loves thee, that prevents or returns thy kindness; but every child of man, every human creature, every soul which God hath made; not excepting him whom thou never hast seen in the flesh, whom thou knowest not, either by face or name; not excepting him whom thou knowest to be evil and unthankful, him that still despitefully uses and persecutes thee: him thou shalt love *as thyself;* with the same invariable thirst after his happiness in every kind; the same unwearied care to screen him from whatever might grieve or hurt either his soul or body.

9. Now is not this love "the fulfilling of the law?" the sum of all Christian righteousness?—of all inward righteousness; for it necessarily implies "bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind," (seeing "love is not puffed up,") "gentleness, meekness, longsuffering:" (for love "is not provoked;" but "believeth, hopeth, endureth all things:") and of all outward righteousness; for "love worketh no evil to his neighbour," either by word or deed. It cannot willingly hurt or grieve any one. And it is zealous of good works. Every lover of mankind, as he hath opportunity, "doeth good unto all men," being (without partiality, and without hypocrisy) "full of mercy and good fruits."

10. But true religion, or a heart right toward God and man, implies happiness as well as holiness. For it is not only

"righteousness," but also "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What peace? "The peace of God," which God only can give, and the world cannot take away; the peace which "passeth all understanding," all barely rational conception; being a supernatural sensation, a divine taste, of "the powers of the world to come;" such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world; nor, indeed, can he know it, in his present state, "because it is spiritually discerned." It is a peace that banishes all doubt, all painful uncertainty; the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirit of a Christian, that he is "a child of God." And it banishes fear, all such fear as hath torment; the fear of the wrath of God; the fear of hell; the fear of the devil; and, in particular, the fear of death: he that hath the peace of God, desiring, if it were the will of God, "to depart, and to be with Christ."

11. With this peace of God, wherever it is fixed in the soul, there is also "joy in the Holy Ghost;" joy wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, by the ever-blessed Spirit of God. He it is that worketh in us that calm, humble rejoicing in God, through Christ Jesus, "by whom we have now received the atonement," καταλλαγήν, the reconciliation with God; and that enables us boldly to confirm the truth of the royal Psalmist's declaration, "Blessed is the man" (or rather, *happy*) "whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." He it is that inspires the Christian soul with that even, solid joy, which arises from the testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God; and that gives him to "rejoice with joy unspeakable, in hope of the glory of God;" hope both of the glorious image of God, which is in part, and shall be fully, "revealed in Him;" and of that crown of glory which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

12. This holiness and happiness, joined in one, are sometimes styled, in the inspired writings, "the kingdom of God," (as by our Lord in the text,) and sometimes, "the kingdom of heaven." It is termed, "the kingdom of God," because it is the immediate fruit of God's reigning in the soul. So soon as ever He takes unto Himself His mighty power, and

sets up His throne in our hearts, they are instantly filled with this "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is called "the kingdom of heaven," because it is (in a degree) heaven opened in the soul. For whosoever they are that experience this, they can aver before angels and men,

> "Everlasting life is won,
> Glory is on earth begun;"

according to the constant tenor of Scripture, which everywhere bears record, God "hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son" (reigning in his heart) "hath life," even life everlasting. (1 John v. 11, 12.) For "this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) And they to whom this is given may confidently address God, though they were in the midst of a fiery furnace,—

> "Thee, Lord, safe shielded by Thy power,
> Thee, Son of God, JEHOVAH, we adore;
> In form of man descending to appear:
> To Thee be ceaseless hallelujahs given,
> Praise, as in heaven Thy throne, we offer here;
> For where Thy presence is display'd, is heaven."

13. And this "kingdom of God," or of heaven, "is at hand." As these words were originally spoken, they implied that "the time" was then fulfilled, God being "made manifest in the flesh," when He would set up His kingdom among men, and reign in the hearts of His people. And is not the time now fulfilled? For, "Lo!" (saith He,) "I am with you alway," you who preach remission of sins in My name, "even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) Wheresoever, therefore, the Gospel of Christ is preached, this His "kingdom is nigh at hand." It is not far from every one of you. Ye may this hour enter thereinto, if so be ye hearken to His voice, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."

II. 1. This is the way: walk ye in it. And, first, "re-

pent;" that is, know yourselves. This is the first repentance, previous to faith; even conviction, or self-knowledge. Awake, then, thou that sleepest. Know thyself to be a sinner, and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou art very far gone from original righteousness, whereby "the flesh lusteth" always "contrary to the Spirit," through that "carnal mind" which "is enmity against God," which "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Know that thou art corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul; that thou art totally corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out of course. The eyes of thine understanding are darkened, so that they cannot discern God, or the things of God. The clouds of ignorance and error rest upon thee, and cover thee with the shadow of death. Thou knowest nothing yet as thou oughtest to know, neither God, nor the world, nor thyself. Thy will is no longer the will of God, but is utterly perverse and distorted, averse from all good, from all which God loves, and prone to all evil, to every abomination which God hateth. Thy affections are alienated from God, and scattered abroad over all the earth. All thy passions, both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects. So that there is no soundness in thy soul; but "from the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot," (to use the strong expression of the Prophet,) there are only "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

2. Such is the inbred corruption of thy heart, of thy very inmost nature. And what manner of branches canst thou expect to grow from such an evil root? Hence springs unbelief; ever departing from the living God; saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve Him? Tush! Thou God carest not for it." Hence independence; affecting to be like the Most High. Hence pride, in all its forms; teaching thee to say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." From this evil fountain flow forth the bitter streams of vanity, thirst of praise, ambition, covetousness,

the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. From this arise anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmisings: from this, all the foolish and hurtful lusts that now "pierce thee through with many sorrows," and, if not timely prevented, will at length drown thy soul in everlasting perdition.

3. And what fruits can grow on such branches as these? Only such as are bitter and evil continually. Of pride cometh contention, vain boasting, seeking and receiving praise of men, and so robbing God of that glory which He cannot give unto another. Of the lust of the flesh, come gluttony or drunkenness, luxury or sensuality, fornication, uncleanness; variously defiling that body which was designed for a temple of the Holy Ghost: of unbelief, every evil word and work. But the time would fail, shouldest thou reckon up all; all the idle words thou hast spoken, provoking the Most High, grieving the Holy One of Israel; all the evil works thou hast done, either wholly evil in themselves, or, at least, not done to the glory of God. For thy actual sins are more than thou art able to express, more than the hairs of thy head. Who can number the sands of the sea, or the drops of rain, or thy iniquities?

4. And knowest thou not that "the wages of sin is death?"—death, not only temporal, but eternal. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It shall die the second death. This is the sentence, to "be punished" with never-ending death, "with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Knowest thou not that every sinner ἔνοχος ἐστι τῇ γεεννῇ τοῦ πυρὸς, not properly "is in danger of hell-fire;" that expression is far too weak; but rather "is under the sentence of hell-fire;" doomed already, just dragging to execution. Thou art guilty of everlasting death. It is the just reward of thy inward and outward wickedness. It is just that the sentence should now take place. Dost thou see, dost thou feel this? Art thou thoroughly convinced, that thou deservest God's wrath, and everlasting damnation? Would God do thee no wrong, if He now commanded the

earth to open, and swallow thee up? if thou wert now to go down quick into the pit, into the fire that never shall be quenched? If God hath given thee truly to repent, thou hast a deep sense that these things are so; and that it is of His mere mercy thou art not consumed, swept away from the face of the earth.

5. And what wilt thou do to appease the wrath of God, to atone for all thy sins, and to escape the punishment thou hast so justly deserved? Alas, thou canst do nothing; nothing that will in anywise make amends to God for one evil work, or word, or thought. If thou couldest now do all things well, if from this very hour till thy soul should return to God thou couldest perform perfect, uninterrupted obedience, even this would not atone for what is past. The not increasing thy debt would not discharge it. It would still remain as great as ever. Yea, the present and future obedience of all the men upon earth, and all the angels in heaven, would never make satisfaction to the justice of God for one single sin. How vain, then, was the thought of atoning for thy own sins, by anything thou couldest do! It costeth far more to redeem one soul, than all mankind is able to pay. So that were there no other help for a guilty sinner, without doubt he must have perished everlastingly.

6. But suppose perfect obedience, for the time to come, could atone for the sins that are past, this would profit thee nothing; for thou art not able to perform it; no, not in any one point. Begin now: make the trial. Shake off that outward sin that so easily besetteth thee. Thou canst not. How then wilt thou change thy life from all evil to all good? Indeed, it is impossible to be done, unless first thy heart be changed. For, so long as the tree remains evil, it cannot bring forth good fruit. But art thou able to change thy own heart, from all sin to all holiness? to quicken a soul that is dead in sin,—dead to God, and alive only to the world? No more than thou art able to quicken a dead body, to raise to life him that lieth in the grave. Yea, thou art not able to quicken thy soul in any degree, no more than to give any degree of life to the dead body. Thou canst do nothing, more

or less, in this matter; thou art utterly without strength. To be deeply sensible of this, how helpless thou art, as well as how guilty and how sinful,—this is that "repentance not to be repented of," which is the forerunner of the kingdom of God.

7. If to this lively conviction of thy inward and outward sins, of thy utter guiltiness and helplessness, there be added suitable affections,—sorrow of heart, for having despised thy own mercies,—remorse, and self-condemnation, having thy mouth stopped,—shame to lift up thine eyes to heaven,—fear of the wrath of God abiding on thee, of His curse hanging over thy head, and of the fiery indignation ready to devour those who forget God, and obey not our Lord Jesus Christ, —earnest desire to escape from that indignation, to cease from evil, and learn to do well;—then I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." One step more, and thou shalt enter in. Thou dost "repent." Now, "believe the Gospel."

8. *The Gospel*, (that is, good tidings, good news for guilty, helpless sinners,) in the largest sense of the word, means, the whole revelation made to men by Jesus Christ; and sometimes the whole account of what our Lord did and suffered while He tabernacled among men. The substance of all is, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" or, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life;" or, "He was bruised for our trangressions, He was wounded for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

9. *Believe* this, and the kingdom of God is thine. By faith thou attainest the promise. "He pardoneth and absolveth all that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel." As soon as ever God hath spoken to thy heart, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," His kingdom comes: thou hast "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

10. Only beware thou do not deceive thy own soul, with regard to the nature of this faith. It is not, as some have fondly conceived, a bare assent to the truth of the Bible, of the articles of our Creed, or of all that is contained in the Old

and New Testament. The devils believe this, as well as I or thou! And yet they are devils still. But it is, over and above this, a sure trust in the mercy of God, through Christ Jesus. It is a confidence in a pardoning God. It is a divine evidence or conviction that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their" former "trespasses;" and in particular, that the Son of God hath loved *me*, and given Himself for *me*; and that I, even I, am now reconciled to God by the blood of the cross.

11. Dost thou thus believe? Then the peace of God is in thy heart, and sorrow and sighing flee away. Thou art no longer in doubt of the love of God; it is clear as the noon-day sun. Thou criest out, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be telling of Thy truth, from one generation to another." Thou art no longer afraid of hell, or death, or him that had once the power of death, the devil; no, nor painfully afraid of God Himself; only thou hast a tender, filial fear of offending Him. Dost thou believe? Then thy "soul doth magnify the Lord," and thy "spirit rejoiceth in God thy Saviour." Thou rejoicest in that thou hast "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thou rejoicest in that "Spirit of adoption," which crieth in thy heart, "Abba, Father!" Thou rejoicest in a "hope full of immortality;" in reaching forth unto the "mark for the prize of thy high calling;" in an earnest expectation of all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

12. Dost thou now believe? Then "the love of God is" now "shed abroad in thy heart." Thou lovest Him, because He first loved us. And, because thou lovest God, thou lovest thy brother also. And being filled with "love, peace, joy," thou art also filled with "long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, meekness, temperance," and all the other fruits of the same Spirit; in a word, with whatever dispositions are holy, are heavenly, or divine. For while thou "beholdest with open," uncovered "face" (the veil now being taken away) "the glory of the Lord," His glorious love, and the glorious image wherein thou wast created, thou art "changed

into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

13. This repentance, this faith, this peace, joy, love; this change from glory to glory, is what the wisdom of the world has voted to be madness, mere enthusiasm, utter distraction. But thou, O man of God, regard them not; be thou moved by none of these things. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed. See that no man take thy crown. Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast, and follow, till thou attain all the great and precious promises. And thou who hast not yet known Him, let not vain men make thee ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Be thou in nothing terrified by those who speak evil of the things which they know not. God will soon turn thy heaviness into joy. O let not thy hands hang down! Yet a little longer, and He will take away thy fears, and give thee the spirit of a sound mind. He is nigh "that justifieth: who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that rose again, who is even now at the right hand of God, making intercession" for thee.

Now cast thyself on the Lamb of God, with all thy sins, how many soever they be; and "an entrance shall" now "be ministered unto thee into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

In what does religion *not* consist?

"In anything exterior to the heart."—SEC. I. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Then what is the real value of forms and ceremonies?

"Supposing them to be ever so decent," etc.—SEC. I. 4.

Whom does Wesley mention as the paragon of unsaving orthodoxy?

"He may be almost as orthodox as the devil," etc.—SEC. I. 6.

What is it to "love thy neighbour as thyself"?

"Thou shalt embrace with the most tender goodwill," etc.—SEC. I. 8.

What does true religion imply besides holiness?

"Happiness."—SEC. I. 9.

THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

"*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" ROMANS viii. 1.

BY "them which are in Christ Jesus," St. Paul evidently means, those who truly believe in Him; those who, "being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." They who thus believe do no longer "walk after the flesh," no longer follow the motions of corrupt nature, but "after the spirit;" both their thoughts, words, and works are under the direction of the blessed Spirit of God.

2. "There is therefore now no condemnation to" these. There is no condemnation to them from God; for He hath *justified* them "freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus." He hath forgiven all their iniquities, and blotted out all their sins. And there is no condemnation to them from within; for they "have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that they might know the things which are freely given to them of God;" (1 Cor. ii. 12;) which Spirit "beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." And to this is added the testimony of their conscience, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.)

3. But because this scripture has been so frequently misunderstood, and that in so dangerous a manner; because such multitudes of "unlearned and unstable men" (οι αμαθεις και ασηρικτοι, men untaught of God, and consequently unestablished in the truth which is after godliness) have wrested it to

their own destruction; I propose to show, as clearly as I can, first, who those are "which are in Christ Jesus," and "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" and, secondly, how "there is no condemnation to" these. I shall conclude with some practical inferences.

I. 1. First, I am to show, who those are that "are in Christ Jesus." And are they not those who believe in His name? those who are "found in Him, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith?" These, "who have redemption through His blood," are properly said to be *in Him;* for they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them. They are joined unto the Lord in one Spirit. They are ingrafted into Him, as branches into the vine. They are united, as members to their head, in a manner which words cannot express, nor could it before enter into their hearts to conceive.

2. Now "whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not;" "walketh not after the flesh." The flesh, in the usual language of St. Paul, signifies corrupt nature. In this sense he uses the word, writing to the Galatians, "The works of the flesh are manifest;" (Gal. v. 19;) and a little before, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust" (or desire) "of the flesh." (Ver. 16.) To prove which, namely, that those who "walk by the Spirit" do not "fulfil the lusts of the flesh," he immediately adds, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh; (for these are contrary to each other;) that ye may not do the things which ye would." So the words are literally translated, (ἵνα μὴ ἃ ἂν θέλητε, ταῦτα ποιῆτε,) not, "So that ye cannot do the things that ye would;" as if the flesh overcame the Spirit: a translation which hath not only nothing o do with the original text of the Apostle, but likewise makes his whole argument nothing worth; yea, asserts just the reverse of what he is proving.

3. They who are of Christ, who abide in Him, "have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." They abstain from all those works of the flesh; from "adultery and

fornication;" from "uncleanness and lasciviousness;" from "idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance;" from "emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings;" from every design, and word, and work, to which the corruption of nature leads. Although they feel the root of bitterness in themselves, yet are they endued with power from on high to trample it continually under foot, so that it cannot "spring up to trouble them;" insomuch that every fresh assault which they undergo, only gives them fresh occasion of praise, of crying out, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

4. They now "walk after the Spirit," both in their hearts and lives. They are taught of Him to love God and their neighbour, with a love which is as "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." And by Him they are led into every holy desire, into every divine and heavenly temper, till every thought which arises in their heart is holiness unto the Lord.

5. They who "walk after the Spirit" are also led by Him into all holiness of conversation. Their "speech is always in grace, seasoned with salt;" with the love and fear of God. "No corrupt communication comes out of their mouth; but only that which is good;" that which is "to the use of edifying;" which is "meet to minister grace to the hearers." And herein likewise do they exercise themselves day and night, to do only the things which please God; in all their outward behaviour to follow Him "who left us an example that we might tread in His steps;" in all their intercourse with their neighbour, to walk in justice, mercy, and truth; and "whatsoever they do," in every circumstance of life, to "do all to the glory of God."

6. These are they who indeed "walk after the Spirit." Being filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost, they possess in their hearts, and show forth in their lives, in the whole course of their words and actions, the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God, namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance," and

whatsoever else is lovely or praiseworthy. "They adorn in all things the Gospel of God our Saviour;" and give full proof to all mankind, that they are indeed actuated by the same Spirit "which raised up Jesus from the dead."

II. 1. I proposed to show, in the second place, how, "there is no condemnation to them which are" thus "in Christ Jesus," and thus "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And, first, to believers in Christ, walking thus, "there is no condemnation" on account of their past sins. God condemneth them not for any of these: they are as though they had never been; they are cast "as a stone into the depth of the sea," and he remembereth them no more. God, having "set forth His Son to be a propitiation" for them "through faith in His blood," hath declared unto them "His righteousness for the remission of the sins that are past." He layeth therefore none of these to their charge; their memorial is perished with them.

2. And there is no condemnation in their own breast; no sense of guilt, or dread of the wrath of God. They "have the witness in themselves:" they are conscious of their interest in the blood of sprinkling. "They have not received again the spirit of bondage unto fear," unto doubt and racking uncertainty; but they "have received the Spirit of adoption," crying in their heart, "Abba, Father." Thus, being "justified by faith," they have the peace of God ruling in their hearts; flowing from a continual sense of His pardoning mercy, and "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

3. If it be said, "But sometimes a believer in Christ may lose his sight of the mercy of God; sometimes such darkness may fall upon him that he no longer sees Him that is invisible, no longer feels that witness in himself of his part in the atoning blood; and then he is inwardly condemned, he hath again 'the sentence of death in himself:'" I answer, supposing it so to be, supposing him not to see the mercy of God, then he is not a believer: for faith implies light; the

light of God shining upon the soul. So far, therefore, as any one loses this light, he, for the time, loses his faith. And, no doubt, a true believer in Christ may lose the light of faith; and so far as this is lost, he may, for a time, fall again into condemnation. But this is not the case of them who now "are in Christ Jesus," who now believe in His name. For so long as they believe, and walk after the Spirit, neither God condemns them, nor their own heart.

4. They are not condemned, secondly, for any present sins, for now transgressing the commandments of God. For they do not transgress them: they do not "walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This is the continual proof of their "love of God, that they keep His commandments;" even as St. John bears witness, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. For His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God:" he cannot, so long as that seed of God, that loving, holy faith remaineth in him. So long as "he keepeth himself" herein, "that wicked one toucheth him not." Now it is evident, he is not condemned for the sins which he doth not commit at all. They, therefore, who are thus "led by the Spirit are not under the law:" (Gal. v. 18:) not under the curse or condemnation of it; for it condemns none but those who break it. Thus, that law of God, "Thou shalt not steal," condemns none but those who do steal. Thus, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," condemns those only who do not keep it holy. But against the fruits of the Spirit "there is no law;" (ver. 23;) as the Apostle more largely declares in those memorable words of his former Epistle to Timothy: "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this," (if, while he uses the law of God, in order either to convince or direct, he know and remember this,) ὅτι δικαίῳ νόμος οὐ κεῖται, (not "that the law is not made for a righteous man," but) "that the law does not lie against a righteous man:" it has no force against him, no power to condemn him; "but against the lawless and disobedient, against the ungodly and sinners, against the unholy and profane; according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." (1 Tim. i. 8, 9, 11.)

5. They are not condemned, thirdly, for inward sin, even though it does now remain. That the corruption of nature does still remain, even in those who are the children of God by faith; that they have in them the seeds of pride and vanity, of anger, lust, and evil desire, yea, sin of every kind; is too plain to be denied, being matter of daily experience. And on this account it is, that St. Paul, speaking to those whom he had just before witnessed to be "in Christ Jesus," (1 Cor. i. 2, 9,) to have been "called of God into the fellowship" (or participation) "of His Son Jesus Christ;" yet declares, "Brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ:" (1 Cor. iii. 1:) "babes in Christ;" so we see they were "in Christ;" they were believers in a low degree. And yet how much of sin remained in them! of that "carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God!"

6. And yet, for all this, they are not condemned. Although they feel the flesh, the evil nature, in them; although they are more sensible, day by day, that their "heart is deceitful and desperately wicked;" yet, so long as they do not yield thereto; so long as they give no place to the devil; so long as they maintain a continual war with all sin, with pride, anger, desire, so that the flesh hath not dominion over them, but they still "walk after the Spirit;" "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." God is well-pleased with their sincere, though imperfect obedience; and they "have confidence toward God," knowing they are His, "by the Spirit which He hath given" them. (1 John iii 24.)

7. Nay, fourthly, although they are continually convinced of sin cleaving to all they do; although they are conscious of not fulfilling the perfect law, either in their thoughts, or words, or works; although they know they do not love the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; although they feel more or less of pride, or self-will, stealing in and mixing with their best duties; although even in their more immediate intercourse with God, when they assemble themselves with the great congregation, and when they pour out their souls in secret to Him who seeth all

the thoughts and intents of the heart, they are continually ashamed of their wandering thoughts, or of the deadness and dulness of their affections; yet there is no condemnation to them still, either from God or from their own heart. The consideration of these manifold defects only gives them a deeper sense that they have always need of that blood of sprinkling which speaks for them in the ears of God, and that Advocate with the Father "who ever liveth to make intercession for them." So far are these from driving them away from Him in whom they have believed, that they rather drive them the closer to Him whom they feel the want of every moment. And, at the same time, the deeper sense they have of this want, the more earnest desire do they feel, and the more diligent they are, as they "have received the Lord Jesus, so to walk in Him."

8. They are not condemned, fifthly, for sins of infirmity, as they are usually called. Perhaps it were advisable rather to call them *infirmities*, that we may not seem to give any countenance to sin, or to extenuate it in any degree, by thus coupling it with infirmity. But, (if we must retain so ambiguous and dangerous an expression,) by sins of infirmity I would mean, such involuntary failings as the saying a thing we believe true, though, in fact, it prove to be false; or, the hurting our neighbour without knowing or designing it, perhaps when we designed to do him good. Though these are deviations from the holy, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, yet they are not properly sins, nor do they bring any guilt on the conscience of "them which are in Christ Jesus." They separate not between God and them, neither intercept the light of His countenance; as being no ways inconsistent with their general character of "walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

9. Lastly. "There is no condemnation" to them for anything whatever which it is not in their power to help; whether it be of an inward or outward nature, and whether it be doing something or leaving something undone. For instance, the Lord's supper is to be administered; but you do not partake thereof. Why do you not? You are confined

by sickness; therefore you cannot help omitting it; and for the same reason you are not condemned. There is no guilt, because there is no choice. As there "is a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not."

10. A believer, indeed, may sometimes be *grieved*, because he cannot do what his soul longs for. He may cry out, when he is detained from worshipping God in the great congregation, "Like as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear in the presence of God?" He may earnestly desire (only still saying in his heart, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt") to "go again with the multitude, and bring them forth into the house of God." But still, if he cannot go, he feels no condemnation, no guilt, no sense of God's displeasure; but can cheerfully yield up those desires with, "O my soul, put thy trust in God! for I will yet give Him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God."

11. It is more difficult to determine concerning those which are usually styled sins of surprise; as when one who commonly in patience possesses his soul, on a sudden and violent temptation, speaks or acts in a manner not consistent with the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Perhaps it is not easy to fix a general rule concerning transgressions of this nature. We cannot say, either that men are, or that they are not, condemned for sins of surprise in general: but it seems, whenever a believer is by surprise overtaken in a fault, there is more or less condemnation, as there is more or less concurrence of his will. In proportion as a sinful desire, or word, or action is more or less voluntary, so we may conceive God is more or less displeased, and there is more or less guilt upon the soul.

12. But if so, then there may be some sins of surprise which bring much guilt and condemnation. For, in some instances, our being surprised is owing to some wilful and culpable neglect; or, to a sleepiness of soul which might have been prevented, or shaken off before the temptation came.

A man may be previously warned either of God or man, that trials and dangers are at hand; and yet may say in his heart, "A little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to rest." Now, if such an one afterwards fall, though unawares, into the snare which he might have avoided,—that he fell unawares is no excuse; he might have foreseen and have shunned the danger. The falling, even by surprise, in such an instance as this, is, in effect, a wilful sin; and, as such, must expose the sinner to condemnation, both from God and his own conscience.

13. On the other hand, there may be sudden assaults, either from the world, or the god of this world, and frequently from our own evil hearts, which we did not, and hardly could, foresee. And by these even a believer, while weak in faith, may possibly be borne down, suppose into a degree of anger, or thinking evil of another, with scarce any concurrence of his will. Now, in such a case, the jealous God would undoubtedly show him that he had done foolishly. He would be convinced of having swerved from the perfect law, from the mind which was in Christ, and consequently, *grieved* with a godly sorrow, and lovingly *ashamed* before God. Yet need he not come into condemnation. God layeth not folly to his charge, but hath compassion upon him, "even as a father pitieth his own children." And his heart condemneth him not: in the midst of that sorrow and shame he can still say, "I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

III. 1. It remains only to draw some practical inferences from the preceding considerations.

And, first, if there be "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," on account of their past sin; then why art thou fearful, O thou of little faith? Though thy sins were once more in number than the sand, what is that to thee, now thou art in Christ Jesus? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" All the sins thou hast committed from

thy youth up, until the hour when thou wast "accepted in the Beloved," are driven away as chaff, are gone, are lost, swallowed up, remembered no more. Thou art now "born of the Spirit:" wilt thou be troubled or afraid of what is done before thou wert born? Away with thy fears! Thou art not called to fear, but to the "spirit of love and of a sound mind." Know thy calling! Rejoice in God thy Saviour, and give thanks to God thy Father through Him.

2. Wilt thou say, "But I have again committed sin, since I had redemption through His blood? And therefore it is, that 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'" It is meet thou shouldest abhor thyself; and it is God who hath wrought thee to this self-same thing. But, dost thou now believe? Hath He again enabled thee to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" "and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God?" Then that faith again cancels all that is past, and there is no condemnation to thee. At whatsoever time thou truly believest in the name of the Son of God, all thy sins, antecedent to that hour, vanish away as the morning dew. Now then, "stand thou fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free." He hath once more made thee free from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it. O "be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage!"—neither the vile, devilish bondage of sin, of evil desires, evil tempers, or words, or works, the most grievous yoke on this side hell; nor the bondage of slavish, tormenting fear, of guilt and self-condemnation.

3. But secondly, do all they which abide "in Christ Jesus, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?" Then we cannot but infer, that whosoever now committeth sin, hath no part or lot in this matter. He is even now condemned by his own heart. But, "if our heart condemn us," if our own conscience beareth witness that we are guilty, undoubtedly God doth; for "He is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things;" so that we cannot deceive Him, if we can ourselves. And think not to say, "I was justified once; my sins were once forgiven me:" I know not that; neither will I dispute whether they were or no. Perhaps at this distance of time,

it is next to impossible to know, with any tolerable degree of certainty, whether that was a true, genuine work of God, or whether thou didst only deceive thy own soul. But this I know, with the utmost degree of certainty, "he that committeth sin is of the devil." Therefore, thou art of thy father the devil. It cannot be denied: for the works of thy father thou doest. O flatter not thyself with vain hopes! Say not to thy soul, "Peace, peace!" For there is no peace. Cry aloud! Cry unto God out of the deep; if haply He may hear thy voice. Come unto Him as at first, as wretched and poor, as sinful, miserable, blind and naked! And beware thou suffer thy soul to take no rest, till His pardoning love be again revealed; till He "heal thy backslidings," and fill thee again with the "faith that worketh by love."

4. Thirdly. Is there no condemnation to them which "walk after the Spirit," by reason of *inward sin* still remaining, so long as they do not give way thereto; nor by reason of *sin cleaving* to all they do? Then fret not thyself because of ungodliness, though it still remain in thy heart. Repine not, because thou still comest short of the glorious image of God; nor yet because pride, self-will, or unbelief, cleave to all thy words and works. And be not afraid to know all this evil of thy heart, to know thyself as also thou art known. Yea, desire of God, that thou mayest not think of thyself more highly than thou oughtest to think. Let thy continual prayer be,

> "Show me, as my soul can bear,
> The depth of inbred sin;
> All the unbelief declare,
> The pride that lurks within."

But when He heareth thy prayer, and unveils thy heart; when He shows thee thoroughly what spirit thou art of; then beware that thy faith fail thee not, that thou suffer not thy shield to be torn from thee. Be abased. Be humbled in the dust. See thyself nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. But still, "let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Still hold fast, "I, even I, have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "And as the heavens are higher than

the earth, so is His love higher than even my sins." Therefore God is merciful to thee a sinner! such a sinner as thou art! God is love; and Christ hath died! Therefore the Father Himself loveth thee! Thou art His child! Therefore He will withhold from thee no manner of thing that is good. Is it good, that the whole body of sin, which is now crucified in thee, should be destroyed? It shall be done! Thou shalt be "cleansed from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit." Is it good, that nothing should remain in thy heart but the pure love of God alone? Be of good cheer! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." "Faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it." It is thy part, patiently to continue in the work of faith, and in the labour of love; and in cheerful peace, in humble confidence, with calm and resigned and yet earnest expectation, to wait till the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.

5. Fourthly. If they that "are in Christ," and "walk after the Spirit," are not condemned for *sins of infirmity*, as neither for *involuntary failings*, nor for anything whatever which they are not able to help; then beware, O thou that hast faith in His blood, that Satan herein gain no advantage over thee. Thou are still foolish and weak, blind and ignorant; more weak than any words can express; more foolish than it can yet enter into thy heart to conceive; knowing nothing yet as thou oughtest to know. Yet, let not all thy weakness and folly, or any fruit thereof, which thou art not yet able to avoid, shake thy faith, thy filial trust in God, or disturb thy peace or joy in the Lord. The rule which some give, as to wilful sins, and which, in that case, may perhaps be dangerous, is undoubtedly wise and safe if it be applied only to the case of weakness and infirmities. Art thou fallen, O man of God? Yet, do not lie there, fretting thyself and bemoaning thy weakness; but meekly say, "Lord, I shall fall thus every moment, unless thou uphold me with thy hand." And then arise! Leap and walk! Go on thy way! "Run with patience the race that is set before thee."

6. Lastly. Since a believer need not come into condem-

nation, even though he be *surprised* into what his soul abhors; (suppose his being surprised is not owing to any carelessness or wilful neglect of his own;) if thou who believest art thus overtaken in a fault, then grieve unto the Lord: it shall be a precious balm. Pour out thy heart before Him, and show Him of thy trouble; and pray with all thy might to Him who is "touched with the feeling of thy infirmities," that He would establish, and strengthen, and settle thy soul, and suffer thee to fall no more. But still He condemneth thee not. Wherefore shouldest thou fear? Thou hast no need of any "fear that hath torment." Thou shalt love Him that loveth thee, and it sufficeth: more love will bring more strength. And, as soon as thou lovest Him with all thy heart, thou shalt be "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Wait in peace for that hour, when "the God of peace shall sanctify thee wholly, so that thy whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Are those "who are in Christ Jesus" condemned for the remains of sin within them?

"They are not condemned."—SEC. II. 5.

How is this proved?

"St. Paul, speaking," etc. *Ibid.*

Are they merely *not condemned?*

"God is *well pleased* with their sincere though imperfect obedience."—SEC. II. 6.

But is there no condemnation in their *own consciences*, if not in the mind of God?

No. "Although they are continually convinced of sin cleaving to all they do," etc.—SEC. II. 7.

Is the phrase "sins of infirmity" safe and unexceptionable?

It is "an ambiguous and dangerous expression."—SEC. II. 8.

What are really "*sins* of surprise"?

Those in which "more or less concurrence of the will," etc. (11); or "some wilful and culpable neglect," or "a sleepiness of soul, etc."—SEC. II. 11, 12.

What is Wesley's advice to those who are conscious of "inward sin still remaining, so long as they do not give way thereto"?

"Fret not thyself because of ungodliness," etc.—SEC. III. 4.

What is the reply to those who express self-abhorrence?

"It is meet thou shouldest abhor thyself," etc.—SEC. III. 2.

What is his advice to those who have fallen?

"Yet, do not lie there," etc.—SEC. III. 5.

What is the process and what the progress of sanctification?

"More love will bring more strength," etc.—SEC. III. 6.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND ADOPTION.

"*Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*" ROMANS viii. 15.

ST. Paul here speaks to those who are the children of God by faith. "Ye," saith he, who are indeed His children, have drank into His Spirit; "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear;" but, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

2. The spirit of bondage and fear is widely distant from this loving Spirit of adoption: those who are influenced only by slavish fear cannot be termed "the sons of God;" yet some of them may be styled His servants, and are "not far from the kingdom of heaven."

3. But it is to be feared, the bulk of mankind, yea, of what is called the Christian world, have not attained even this; but are still afar off, "neither is God in all their thoughts." A few names may be found of those who love God; a few more there are that fear Him; but the greater part have neither the fear of God before their eyes, nor the love of God in their hearts.

4. Perhaps most of you, who, by the mercy of God, now partake of a better spirit, may remember the time when ye were as they, when ye were under the same condemnation. But at first ye knew it not, though ye were wallowing daily in your sins and in your blood; till, in due time, ye "received the spirit of fear;" (*ye received*, for this also is the

gift of God;) and afterwards, fear vanished away, and the Spirit of love filled your hearts.

5. One who is in the first state of mind, without fear or love, is in Scripture termed a "natural man:" one who is under the spirit of bondage and fear, is sometimes said to be "under the law:" (although that expression more frequently signifies one who is under the Jewish dispensation, or who thinks himself obliged to observe all the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law:) but one who has exchanged the spirit of fear for the Spirit of love is properly said to be "under grace."

Now, because it highly imports us to know what spirit we are of, I shall endeavour to point out distinctly, first, the state of a "natural man;" secondly, that of one who is "under the law;" and, thirdly, of one who is "under grace."

I. 1. And, first, the state of a *natural man*. This the Scripture represents as a state of sleep: the voice of God to him is, "Awake thou that sleepest." For his soul is in a deep sleep: his spiritual senses are not awake: they discern neither spiritual good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed; they are sealed together, and see not. Clouds and darkness continually rest upon them; for he lies in the valley of the shadow of death. Hence, having no inlets for the knowledge of spiritual things, all the avenues of his soul being shut up, he is in gross, stupid ignorance of whatever he is most concerned to know. He is utterly ignorant of God, knowing nothing concerning Him as he ought to know. He is totally a stranger to the law of God, as to its true, inward, spiritual meaning. He has no conception of that evangelical holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; nor of the happiness which they only find whose "life is hid with Christ in God."

2. And, for this very reason, because he is fast asleep, he is, in some sense, at rest. Because he is blind, he is also secure: he saith, "Tush, there shall no harm happen unto me." The darkness which covers him on every side, keeps

him in a kind of peace; so far as peace can consist with the works of the devil, and with an earthly, devilish mind. He *sees* not that he stands on the edge of the pit; therefore he *fears* it not. He cannot *tremble* at the danger he does not *know*. He has not understanding enough to fear. Why is it that he is in no dread of God? Because he is totally ignorant of Him: if not saying in his heart, "There is no God;" or, that "He sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and humbleth" not "Himself to behold the things which are done on earth;" yet satisfying himself as well, to all Epicurean intents and purposes, by saying, "God is merciful;" confounding and swallowing up all at once in that unwieldy idea of mercy all His holiness and essential hatred of sin; all His justice, wisdom, and truth. He is in no dread of the vengeance denounced against those who obey not the blessed law of God, because he understands it not. He imagines the main point is, to *do thus*, to be *outwardly* blameless; and sees not that it extends to every temper, desire, thought, motion of the heart. Or he fancies that the obligation hereto is ceased; that Christ came to "destroy the Law and the Prophets;" to save His people *in*, not *from*, their sins; to bring them to heaven without holiness:—notwithstanding His own words, "Not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away, till all things are fulfilled;" and, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

3. He is secure, because he is utterly ignorant of himself. Hence he talks of "repenting by and by;" he does not indeed exactly know when, but some time or other before he dies; taking it for granted, that this is quite in his own power. For what should hinder his doing it, if he will? If he does but once set a resolution, no fear but he will make it good!

4. But this ignorance never so strongly glares, as in those who are termed *men of learning*. If a natural man be one of these, he can talk at large of his rational faculties, of the freedom of his will, and the absolute necessity of such free-

dom, in order to constitute man a moral agent. He reads, and argues, and proves to a demonstration, that every man may do as he will; may dispose his own heart to evil or good, as it seems best in his own eyes. Thus the god of this world spreads a double veil of blindness over his heart, lest, by any means, "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine" upon it.

5. From the same ignorance of himself and God, there may sometimes arise, in the natural man, a kind of *joy*, in congratulating himself upon his own wisdom and goodness; and what the world calls joy, he may often possess. He may have pleasure in various kinds; either in gratifying the desires of the flesh, or the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; particularly if he has large possessions; if he enjoy an affluent fortune; then he may "clothe" himself "in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day." And so long as he thus doeth well unto himself, men will doubtless speak good of him. They will say, "He is a happy man." For, indeed, this is the sum of worldly happiness; to dress, and visit, and talk, and eat, and drink, and rise up to play.

6. It is not surprising, if one in such circumstances as these, dosed with the opiates of flattery and sin, should imagine, among his other waking dreams, that he walks in great *liberty*. How easily may he persuade himself, that he is at liberty from all *vulgar errors*, and from the *prejudice* of education; judging exactly right, and keeping clear of all extremes. "I am free," may he say, "from all the *enthusiasm* of weak and narrow souls; from *superstition*, the disease of fools and cowards, always righteous over much; and from *bigotry*, continually incident to those who have not a free and generous way of thinking." And too sure it is, that he is altogether free from the "wisdom which cometh from above," from holiness, from the religion of the heart, from the whole mind which was in Christ.

7. For all this time he is the servant of sin. He commits sin, more or less, day by day. Yet he is not troubled: he "is in no bondage," as some speak; he feels no condemnation. He contents himself (even though he should profess to

believe that the Christian Revelation is of God) with, "Man is frail. We are all weak. Every man has his infirmity." Perhaps he quotes Scripture: "Why, does not Solomon say,—The righteous man falls into sin seven times a day? And, doubtless, they are all hypocrites or enthusiasts who pretend to be better than their neighbours." If, at any time, a serious thought fix upon him, he stifles it as soon as possible, with, "Why should I fear, since God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners?" Thus, he remains a willing servant of sin, content with the bondage of corruption; inwardly and outwardly unholy, and satisfied therewith; not only not conquering sin, but not striving to conquer, particularly that sin which doth so easily beset him.

8. Such is the state of every *natural man;* whether he be a gross, scandalous transgressor, or a more reputable and decent sinner, having the form, though not the power, of godliness. But how can such an one be *convinced of sin?* How is he brought to *repent?* to be *under the law?* to receive the *spirit of bondage unto fear?* This is the point which is next to be considered.

II. 1. By some awful providence, or by His word applied with the demonstration of His Spirit, God touches the heart of him that lay asleep in darkness and in the shadow of death. He is terribly shaken out of his sleep, and awakes into a consciousness of his danger. Perhaps in a moment, perhaps by degrees, the eyes of his understanding are opened, and now first (the veil being in part removed) discern the real state he is in. Horrid light breaks in upon his soul; such light as may be conceived to gleam from the bottomless pit, from the lowest deep, from a lake of fire burning with brimstone. He at last sees the loving, the merciful God is also "a consuming fire;" that He is a just God and a terrible, rendering to every man according to his works, entering into judgment with the ungodly for every idle word, yea, and for the imaginations of the heart. He now clearly perceives, that the great and holy God is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" that He is an avenger of every one who rebelleth

against Him, and repayeth the wicked to his face; and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

2. The inward, spiritual meaning of the law of God now begins to glare upon him. He perceives "the commandment is exceeding broad," and there is "nothing hid from the light thereof." He is convinced, that every part of it relates, not barely to outward sin or obedience, but to what passes in the secret recesses of the soul, which no eye but God's can penetrate. If he now hears, "Thou shalt not kill," God speaks in thunder, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer;" "He that saith unto his brother, Thou fool, is obnoxious to hell-fire." If the law say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," the voice of the Lord sounds in his ears, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And thus, in every point, he feels the word of God "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edge dsword." It "pierces even to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit, his joints and marrow." And so much the more, because he is conscious to himself of having neglected so great salvation; of having "trodden under foot the Son of God," who would have saved him from his sins, and "counted the blood of the covenant an unholy," a common, unsanctifying "thing."

3. And as he knows, "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," so he sees himself naked, stripped of all the fig-leaves which he had sewed together, of all his poor pretences to religion or virtue, and his wretched excuses for sinning against God. He now sees himself like the ancient sacrifices, τετραχηλισμένον, *cleft in sunder*, as it were, from the neck downward, so that all within him stands confessed. His heart is bare, and he sees it is all sin, "deceitful above all things, desperately wicked;" that it is altogether corrupt and abominable, more than it is possible for tongue to express; that there dwelleth therein no good thing, but unrighteousness and ungodliness only; every motion thereof, every temper and thought, being only evil continually.

4. And he not only sees, but feels in himself, by an emotion of soul which he cannot describe, that for the sins of his heart, were his life without blame, (which yet it is not, and cannot be; seeing "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit,") he deserves to be cast into the fire that never shall be quenched. He feels that "the wages," the just reward, "of sin," of his sin above all, "is death;" even the second death; the death which dieth not; the destruction of body and soul in hell.

5. Here ends his pleasing dream, his delusive rest, his false peace, his vain security. His joy now vanishes as a cloud; pleasures, once loved, delight no more. They pall upon the taste: he loathes the nauseous sweet; he is weary to bear them. The shadows of happiness flee away, and sink into oblivion: so that he is stripped of all, and wanders to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none.

6. The fumes of those opiates being now dispelled, he feels the anguish of a wounded spirit. He finds that sin let loose upon the soul (whether it be pride, anger, or evil desire, whether self-will, malice, envy, revenge, or any other) is perfect misery: he feels sorrow of heart for the blessings he has lost, and the curse which is come upon him; remorse for having thus destroyed himself, and despised his own mercies; fear, from a lively sense of the wrath of God, and of the consequences of His wrath, of the punishment which he has justly deserved, and which he sees hanging over his head;—fear of death, as being to him the gate of hell, the entrance of death eternal;—fear of the devil, the executioner of the wrath and righteous vengeance of God;—fear of men, who, if they were able to kill his body, would thereby plunge both body and soul into hell;—fear, sometimes arising to such a height, that the poor, sinful, guilty soul is terrified with everything, with nothing, with shades, with a leaf shaken of the wind. Yea, sometimes it may even border upon distraction, making a man "drunken though not with wine," suspending the exercise of the memory, of the understanding, of all the natural faculties. Sometimes it may approach to the very brink of despair; so that he who trembles at the name of death, may yet be ready to plunge into it every moment, to

"choose strangling rather than life." Well may such a man roar, like him of old, for the very disquietness of his heart. Well may he cry out, "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

7. Now he truly desires to break loose from sin, and begins to struggle with it. But though he strive with all his might, he cannot conquer: sin is mightier than he. He would fain escape; but he is so fast in prison, that he cannot get forth. He resolves against sin, but yet sins on: he sees the snare, and abhors and runs into it. So much does his boasted reason avail,—only to enhance his guilt, and increase his misery! Such is the freedom of his will; free only to evil; free to "drink in iniquity like water;" to wander farther and farther from the living God, and do more "despite to the Spirit of grace."

8. The more he strives, wishes, labours to be free, the more does he feel his chains, the grievous chains of sin, wherewith Satan binds and "leads him captive at his will;" his servant he is, though he repine ever so much; though he rebel, he cannot prevail. He is still in bondage and fear, by reason of sin: generally, of some outward sin, to which he is peculiarly disposed, either by nature, custom, or outward circumstances; but always, of some inward sin, some evil temper or unholy affection. And the more he frets against it the more it prevails; he may bite, but cannot break his chain. Thus he toils without end, repenting and sinning, and repenting and sinning again, till at length the poor, sinful, helpless wretch is even at his wit's end, and can barely groan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

9. This whole struggle of one who is "under the law," under the "spirit of fear and bondage," is beautifully described by the Apostle in the foregoing chapter, speaking in the person of an awakened man. "I," saith he, "was alive without the law once:" (verse 9:) I had much life, wisdom, strength, and virtue; so I thought: "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died:" when the commandment, in its spiritual meaning, came to my heart,

with the power of God, my inbred sin was stirred up, fretted, inflamed, and all my virtue died away. "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me:" (verses 10, 11:) it came upon me unawares; slew all my hopes; and plainly showed, in the midst of life I was in death. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good:" (verse 12:) I no longer lay the blame on this, but on the corruption of my own heart. I acknowledge that "the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin:" (verse 14:) I now see both the spiritual nature of the law; and my own carnal, devilish heart "sold under sin," totally enslaved: (like slaves bought with money, who were absolutely at their master's disposal:) "for that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do:" (verse 15:) such is the bondage under which I groan; such the tyranny of my hard master. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do:" (verses 18, 19:) "I find a law," an inward constraining power, "that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in," or consent to, "the law of God, after the inward man:" (verses 21, 22:) in my "mind:" (so the Apostle explains himself in the words that immediately follow; and so ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, *the inward man*, is understood in all other Greek writers:) "but I see another law in my members," another constraining power, "warring against the law of my mind," or inward man, "and bringing me into captivity to the law" or power "of sin:" (verse 23:) dragging me, as it were, at my conqueror's chariot wheels, into the very thing which my soul abhors. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (verse 24.) Who shall deliver me from this helpless, dying life, from this bondage of sin and misery? Till this is done, "I myself" (or rather, *that I* αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, that man I am now personating) "with the mind," or inward man, "serve the law of God;" my mind, my conscience is on God's side: "but with my flesh," with my body

"the law of sin," (verse 25,) being hurried away by a force I cannot resist.

10. How lively a portraiture is this of one "under the law!" one who feels the burden he cannot shake off; who pants after liberty, power, and love, but is in fear and bondage still! until the time that God answers the wretched man, crying out, "Who shall deliver me" from this bondage of sin, from this body of death?—"The grace of God through Jesus Christ thy Lord."

III. 1. Then it is that this miserable bondage ends, and he is no more "under the law, but under grace." This state we are, thirdly, to consider; the state of one who has found *grace* or favour in the sight of God, even the Father, and who has the *grace* or power of the Holy Ghost reigning in his heart; who has received, in the language of the Apostle, the "Spirit of adoption, whereby" he now cries, "Abba, Father!"

2. "He cried unto the Lord in his trouble, and God delivers him out of his distress." His eyes are opened in quite another manner than before, even to see a loving, gracious God. While he is calling, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!"—he hears a voice in his inmost soul, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord: I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." And it is not long before "the Lord descends in the cloud, and proclaims the name of the Lord." Then he sees, but not with eyes of flesh and blood, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquities, and transgressions, and sin."

3. Heavenly, healing light now breaks in upon his soul. He "looks on Him whom he had pierced;" and "God, who out of darkness commanded light to shine, shineth in his heart." He sees the light of the glorious love of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. He hath a divine "evidence of things not seen" by sense, even of "the deep things of God;" more

particularly of the love of God, of His pardoning love to him that believes in Jesus. Overpowered with the sight, his whole soul cries out, "My Lord, and my God!" For he sees all his iniquities laid on Him who "bare them in His own body on the tree:" he beholds the Lamb of God taking away his sins. How clearly now does he discern, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; making Him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him;"—and that he himself is reconciled to God, by that blood of the covenant!

4. Here end both the guilt and power of sin. He can now say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh," (even in this mortal body,) "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Here end remorse, and sorrow of heart, and the anguish of a wounded spirit. "God turneth his heaviness into joy." He made sore, and now His hands bind up. Here ends also that bondage unto fear; for "his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord." He cannot fear any longer the wrath of God; for he knows it is now turned away from him, and looks upon Him no more as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father. He cannot fear the devil, knowing he has "no power, except it be given him from above." He fears not hell; being an heir of the kingdom of heaven: consequently, he has no fear of death; by reason whereof he was in time past, for so many years, "subject to bondage." Rather, knowing that "if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, he hath a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; he groaneth earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with that house which is from heaven." He groans to shake off this house of earth, that "mortality" may be "swallowed up of life;" knowing that God "hath wrought him for the selfsame thing; who hath also given him the earnest of His Spirit."

5. And "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;' liberty, not only from guilt and fear, but from sin, from that heaviest of all yokes, that basest of all bondage. His labour

is not now in vain. The snare is broken, and he is delivered. He not only strives, but likewise prevails; he not only fights, but conquers also. "Henceforth he does not serve sin." (Chap. vi. 6, &c.) He is "dead unto sin, and alive unto God;" "sin doth not now reign," even "in his mortal body," nor doth he "obey it in the desires thereof." He does not "yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God." For "being now made free from sin, he is become the servant of righteousness."

6. Thus "having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," and having power over all sin, over every evil desire, and temper, and word, and work, he is a living witness of the "glorious liberty of the sons of God;" all of whom, being partakers of like precious faith, bear record with one voice, "We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!"

7. It is this Spirit which continually "worketh in them, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is He that sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts, and the love of all mankind; thereby purifying their hearts from the love of the world, from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is by Him they are delivered from anger and pride, from all vile and inordinate affections. In consequence, they are delivered from evil words and works, from all unholiness of conversation; doing no evil to any child of man, and being zealous of all good works.

8. To sum up all: the *natural* man neither fears nor loves God, one *under the law*, fears,—one *under grace*, loves Him. The first has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness; the second sees the painful light of hell; the third, the joyous light of heaven. He that sleeps in death, has a false peace; he that is awakened, has no peace at all; he that believes, has true peace,—the peace of God filling and ruling his heart. The Heathen, baptized or unbaptized, hath a fancied liberty, which is indeed licentiousness; the Jew, or one under the Jewish dispensation, is in heavy,

grievous bondage; the Christian enjoys the true glorious liberty of the sons of God. An unawakened child of the devil sins willingly; one that is awakened sins unwillingly; a child of God "sinneth not," but "keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not." To conclude: the natural man neither conquers nor fights; the man under the law fights with sin, but cannot conquer; the man under grace fights and conquers, yea, is "more than conqueror through Him that loveth him."

IV. 1. From this plain account of the threefold state of man, the *natural*, the *legal*, and the *evangelical*, it appears that it is not sufficient to divide mankind into sincere and insincere. A man may be sincere in any of these states; not only when he has the "Spirit of adoption," but while he has the "spirit of bondage unto fear;" yea, while he has neither this fear, nor love. For undoubtedly there may be sincere Heathens, as well as sincere Jews or Christians. This circumstance, then, does by no means prove that a man is in a state of acceptance with God.

"Examine yourselves, therefore," not only whether ye are sincere, but "whether ye be in the faith." Examine narrowly, (for it imports you much,) what is the ruling principle in your soul? Is it the love of God? Is it the fear of God? Or is it neither one nor the other? Is it not rather the love of the world? the love of pleasure, or gain? of ease, or reputation? If so, you are not come so far as a Jew. You are but a Heathen still. Have you heaven in your heart? Have you the Spirit of adoption, ever crying, Abba, Father? Or do you cry unto God, as "out of the belly of hell," overwhelmed with sorrow and fear? Or are you a stranger to this whole affair, and cannot imagine what I mean? Heathen, pull off the mask! Thou hast never put on Christ! Stand barefaced! Look up to heaven; and own before Him that liveth for ever and ever, thou hast no part either among the sons or servants of God!

Whosoever thou art, Dost thou commit sin, or dost thou not? If thou dost, is it willingly or unwillingly? In either

case, God hath told thee whose thou art: "He that committeth sin is of the devil." If thou committest it willingly, that art his faithful servant: he will not fail to reward thy labour. If unwillingly, still thou art his servant. God deliver thee out of his hands!

Art thou daily fighting against all sin? and daily more than conqueror? I acknowledge thee for a child of God. O stand fast in thy glorious liberty! Art thou fighting, but not conquering? striving for the mastery, but not able to attain? Then thou art not yet a believer in Christ; but follow on, and thou shalt know the Lord. Art thou not fighting at all, but leading an easy, indolent, fashionable life? O how hast thou dared to name the name of Christ, only to make it a reproach among the Heathen? Awake, thou sleeper! Call upon thy God, before the deep swallow thee up!

2. Perhaps one reason why so many think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, why they do not discern what state they are in, is, because these several states of soul are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person. Thus experience shows, that the legal state, or state of fear, is frequently mixed with the natural; for few men are so fast asleep in sin, but they are sometimes more or less awakened. As the Spirit of God does not "wait for the call of man," so, at some times he *will* be heard. He puts them in fear, so that, for a season at least, the Heathen "know themselves to be but men." They feel the burden of sin, and earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come. But not long: they seldom suffer the arrows of conviction to go deep into their souls; but quickly stifle the grace of God, and return to their wallowing in the mire.

In like manner, the evangelical state, or state of love, is frequently mixed with the legal. For few of those who have the spirit of bondage and fear remain always without hope. The wise and gracious God rarely suffers this; "for He remembereth that we are but dust;" and He willeth not that "the flesh should fail before Him, or the spirit which He hath

made." Therefore at such times as He seeth good, He gives a dawning of light unto them that sit in darkness. He causes a part of His goodness to pass before them, and shows He is a "God that heareth the prayer." They see the promise, which is by faith in Christ Jesus, though it be yet afar off; and hereby they are encouraged to "run with patience the race which is set before them."

3. Another reason why many deceive themselves, is, because they do not consider how far a man may go, and yet be in a natural, or, at best, a legal state. A man may be of a compassionate and a benevolent temper; he may be affable, courteous, generous, friendly; he may have some degree of meekness, patience, temperance, and of many other moral virtues. He may feel many desires of shaking off all vice, and of attaining higher degrees of virtue. He may abstain from much evil; perhaps from all that is grossly contrary to justice, mercy, or truth. He may do much good, may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the widow and fatherless. He may attend public worship, use prayer in private, read many books of devotion; and yet, for all this, he may be a mere natural man, knowing neither himself nor God; equally a stranger to the spirit of fear and to that of love; having neither repented, nor believed the Gospel.

But suppose there were added to all this a deep conviction of sin, with much fear of the wrath of God; vehement desires to cast off every sin, and to fulfil all righteousness; frequent rejoicing in hope, and touches of love often glancing upon the soul; yet neither do these prove a man to be *under grace*, to have true, living, Christian faith, unless the Spirit of adoption abide in his heart, unless he can continually cry, "Abba, Father!"

4. Beware, then, thou who art called by the name of Christ, that thou come not short of the mark of thy high calling. Beware thou rest not, either in a natural state, with too many that are accounted *good Christians;* or in a legal state, wherein those who are highly esteemed of men are generally content to live and die. Nay, but God hath prepared better things for thee, if thou follow on till thou attain.

Thou art not called to fear and tremble, like devils; but to rejoice and love, like the angels of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Thou shalt "rejoice evermore;" thou shalt "pray without ceasing;" thou shalt "in everything give thanks." Thou shalt do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. O prove thou "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!" Now present thyself "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God!" "Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast," by "reaching forth unto those things which are before;" until "the God of peace make thee perfect in every good work, working in thee that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen!"

What three states does Wesley describe in this sermon? and how does he distinguish each from the others in the experience of individuals?

See SEC. 5.

How does Wesley describe the perversion of the truth that "God is merciful"?

As the "confounding and swallowing up all at once in that *unwieldy* idea of mercy all His holiness and essential hatred of sin; all His justice, wisdom and truth," etc.—SEC. I. 2.

How does he describe the ignorance of "men of learning"?

"But this ignorance never so strongly *glares*, as in those who are termed *men of learning*," etc.—SEC. I. 4.

How does he describe the awakening of a soul?

"The inward, spiritual meaning of the law of God now begins to *glare* upon him," etc.—SEC. II. 2.

What is the experience of an awakened sinner as to the *freedom of his will?*

"The more he strives," etc.—SEC. II. 8.

How does he describe the advent of the Spirit of adoption?

"Heavenly, healing light now breaks in upon his soul," etc.—SEC. III. 3.

What concluding classification does he give of the three states of soul?

"The natural man neither conquers, nor fights," etc.—SEC. III. 8 last sentence.

What two kinds of "Heathen" does he mention?

"The Heathen, *baptized* or *unbaptized*."—SEC. III. 8.

By what names does he still further characterize the three states of soul?

"The *natural*, the *legal*, and the *evangelical*."—SEC. IV. 1.

Under what name does he appeal to unconverted Christians?

"*Heathen*, pull off the mask! Thou hast never put on Christ," etc. SEC. IV. 1.

May the three states, in any degree, co-exist in the same person?

"These several states of soul are often mingled together," etc.—SEC. IV. 2.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

DISCOURSE I.

"*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*"—ROMANS viii. 16.

HOW many vain men, not understanding what they spake, neither whereof they affirmed, have wrested this scripture to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls! How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination for the witness of the Spirit of God, and thence idly presumed they were the children of God, while they were doing the works of the devil! These are truly and properly enthusiasts; and, indeed, in the worst sense of the word. But with what difficulty are they convinced thereof, especially if they have drank deep into that spirit of error. All endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, they will then account fighting against God; and that vehemence and impetuosity of spirit, which they call "contending earnestly for the faith," sets them so far above all the usual methods of conviction, that we may well say, "With men it is impossible."

2. Who then can be surprised, if many reasonable men, seeing the dreadful effects of this delusion, and labouring to keep at the utmost distance from it, should sometimes lean toward another extreme?—if they are not forward to believe any who speak of having this witness, concerning which others have so grievously erred?—if they are almost ready to set all down for enthusiasts who use the expressions which have been so terribly abused?—yea, if they should question whether the witness or testimony here spoken of be the privilege of *ordinary* Christians, and not, rather, one of those

extraordinary gifts which they suppose belonged only to the apostolic age?

3. But is there any necessity laid upon us of running either into one extreme or the other? May we not steer a middle course,—keep a sufficient distance from that spirit of error and enthusiasm, without denying the gift of God, and giving up the great privilege of His children? Surely we may. In order thereto, let us consider, in the presence and fear of God,—

I. WHAT IS THIS WITNESS OR TESTIMONY OF OUR SPIRIT WHAT IS THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S SPIRIT; AND, HOW DOES HE "BEAR WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?"

II. HOW IS THIS JOINT TESTIMONY OF GOD'S SPIRIT AND OUR OWN, CLEARLY AND SOLIDLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THE PRESUMPTION OF A NATURAL MIND, AND FROM THE DELUSION OF THE DEVIL?

I. 1. Let us first consider, what is the witness or testimony of our spirit. But here I cannot but desire all those who are for swallowing up the testimony of the Spirit of God in the rational testimony of our own spirit, to observe, that in this text the Apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our own spirit *only*, that it may be questioned whether he speaks of it *at all*,—whether he does not speak *only* of the testimony of God's Spirit? It does not appear but the original text may be faily understood thus. The Apostle had just said, in the preceding verse, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" and immediately subjoins, Αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα (some copies read, τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα) συμμαρτυρει τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα Θεοῦ; which may be translated, "The same Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God." (The preposition σὺν only denoting, that He witnesses this *at the same time* that He enables us to cry, Abba, Father.) But I contend not; seeing so many other texts, with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince, that there is in every believer, both the

testimony of God's Spirit, and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God.

2. With regard to the latter, the foundation thereof is laid in those numerous texts of Scripture which describe the marks of the children of God; and that so plain, that he which runneth may read them. These are also collected together, and placed in the strongest light, by many both ancient and modern writers. If any need farther light, he may receive it by attending on the ministry of God's word; by meditating thereon before God in secret; and by conversing with those who have the knowledge of His ways. And by the reason or understanding that God has given him, which religion was designed not to extinguish, but to perfect;—according to that of the Apostle, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: in malice" or wickedness "be ye children; but in understanding be ye men;" (1 Cor. xiv. 20;)—every man applying those scriptural marks to himself, may know whether he is a child of God. Thus, if he know, first, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God," into all holy tempers and actions, "they are the sons of God;" (for which he has the infallible assurance of holy writ;) secondly, I am thus "led by the Spirit of God;" he will easily conclude,—"Therefore I am a son of God."

3. Agreeable to this are all those plain declarations of St. John, in his First Epistle: "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (Chap. ii. 3.) "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him;" that we are indeed the children of God. (Verse 5.) "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." (Verse 29.) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (Chap. iii. 14.) "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him;" (verse 19;) namely, because we "love one another, not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, because He hath given us of His" loving "Spirit." (Chap. iv. 13.) And, "Hereby we know that He abideth in

us, by the" obedient "Spirit which He hath given us." (Chap. iii. 24.)

4. It is highly probable there never were any children of God, from the beginning of the world unto this day, who were farther advanced in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the Apostle John, at the time when he wrote these words, and the fathers in Christ to whom he wrote. Notwithstanding which, it is evident, both the Apostle himself, and all those pillars in God's temple, were very far from despising these marks of their being the children of God; and that they applied them to their own souls for the confirmation of their faith. Yet all this is no other than rational evidence, the witness of our spirit, our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this: Those who have these marks are children of God: but we have these marks: therefore we are children of God.

5. But how does it appear, that we have these marks? This is a question which still remains. How does it appear, that we do love God and our neighbour, and that we keep His commandments? Observe, that the meaning of the question is, How does it appear to *ourselves*, not to *others?* I would ask him, then, that proposes this question, How does it appear to you, that you are alive, and that you are now in ease, and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness, you will know if your soul is alive to God; if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you cannot but perceive if you love, rejoice, and delight in God. By the same you must be directly assured if you love your neighbour as yourself; if you are kindly affectioned to all mankind, and full of gentleness and long-suffering. And with regard to the outward mark of the children of God, which is, according to St. John, the keeping His commandments, you undoubtedly know in your own breast, if, by the grace of God, it belongs to you. Your conscience informs you from day to day, if you do not take the name of God within your lips, unless with seriousness and devotion, with reverence and godly fear; if you remem-

ber the Sabbath-day to keep it holy; if you honour your father and mother: if you do to all as you would they should do unto you; if you possess your body in sanctification and honour; and if, whether you eat or drink, you are temperate therein, and do all to the glory of God.

6. Now this is properly the testimony of our own spirit; even the testimony of our own conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to His adopted children; even a loving heart toward God, and toward all mankind; hanging with child-like confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but Him, casting all our care upon Him, and embracing every child of man with earnest, tender affection:—a consciousness, that we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of His Son, and that we walk before Him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in His sight.

7. But what is that testimony of God's Spirit, which is superadded to, and conjoined with, this? How does He "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?" It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain "the deep things of God." Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God to correct, to soften, or strengthen the expression,) the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

8. That this testimony of the Spirit of God must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy of heart, and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit, that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the

root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know He loves us. "We love Him, because He first loved us." And we cannot know His pardoning love to us, till His Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of His Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the testimony of our spirit concerning them.

9. Then, and not till then,—when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our spirit, "God hath loved thee, and given His own Son to be the propitiation for thy sins; the Son of God hath loved thee, and hath washed thee from thy sins in His blood,"—"we love God, because He first loved us;" and, for His sake, we love our brother also. And of this we cannot but be conscious to ourselves: we "know the things that are freely given to us of God." We know that we love God, and keep His commandments; and "hereby also we know that we are of God." This is that testimony of our own spirit, which, so long as we continue to love God and keep His commandments, continues joined with the testimony of God's Spirit, "that we are the children of God."

10. Not that I would by any means be understood, by any thing which has been spoken concerning it, to exclude the operation of the Spirit of God, even from the testimony of our own spirit. In no wise. It is He that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon His own work, and clearly shows what He has wrought. Accordingly, this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, "that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God:" that He may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our "simplicity and godly sincerity;" and give us to discern, in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please Him.

11. Should it still be inquired, "How does the Spirit of God 'bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,' so as to exclude all doubt, and evince the reality of our sonship?"—the answer is clear from what has been observed above. And first, as to the witness of our spirit: the soul as intimately and evidently perceives when it loves, delights,

and rejoices in God, as when it loves and delights in anything on earth. And it can no more doubt, whether it loves, delights, and rejoices or no, than whether it exists or no. If, therefore, this be just reasoning,

He that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in Him with an humble joy, and holy delight, and an obedient love, is a child of God:

But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God;

Therefore, I am a child of God:—

Then a Christian can in no wise doubt of his being a child of God. Of the former proposition he has as full an assurance as he has that the Scriptures are of God; and of his thus loving God, he has an inward proof, which is nothing short of self-evidence. Thus, the testimony of our own spirit is with the most intimate conviction manifested to our hearts, in such a manner, as beyond all reasonable doubt to evince the reality of our sonship.

12. The manner how the *divine* testimony is manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto it. The wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof; but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth. As no one knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him; so the *manner* of the things of God knoweth no one, save the Spirit of God. But the fact we know; namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.

II. 1. How this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our spirit may be clearly and solidly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil, is the next thing to be considered. And it highly imports all who desire the salvation of God, to consider it with the deepest attention, as they would not deceive their own souls. An error in this is generally observed to have the

most fatal consequences: the rather, because he that errs, seldom discovers his mistake, till it is too late to remedy it.

2. And, first, how is this testimony to be distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind? It is certain, one who was never convinced of sin is always ready to flatter himself, and to think of himself, especially in spiritual things, more highly than he ought to think. And hence, it is in no wise strange, if one who is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, when he hears of this privilege of true Christians among whom he undoubtedly ranks himself, should soon work himself up into a persuasion that he is already possessed thereof. Such instances now abound in the world, and have abounded in all ages. How then may the real testimony of the Spirit with our spirit be distinguished from this damning presumption?

3. I answer, the holy Scriptures abound with marks, whereby the one may be distinguished from the other. They describe, in the plainest manner, the circumstances which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the true, genuine testimony of the Spirit of God with the spirit of a believer. Whoever carefully weighs and attends to these will not need to put darkness for light. He will perceive so wide a difference, with respect to all these, between the real and the pretended witness of the Spirit, that there will be no danger, I might say, no possibility, of confounding the one with the other.

4. By these, one who vainly presumes on the gift of God might surely know, if he really desired it, that he hath been hitherto "given up to a strong delusion," and suffered to believe a lie. For the Scriptures lay down those clear, obvious marks, as preceding, accompanying, and following that gift, which a little reflection would convince him, beyond all doubt, were never found in his soul. For instance: the Scripture describes repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before this witness of pardon. So, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." (Mark i. 15.) "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins."

(Acts ii. 38.) "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19.) In conformity whereto, our Church also, continually places repentance before pardon, or the witness of it. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel." "Almighty God—hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn unto Him." But he is a stranger even to this repentance: he hath never known a broken and a contrite heart: "the remembrance of his sins" was never "grievous unto him," nor "the burden of them intolerable." In repeating those words, he never meant what he said; he merely paid a compliment to God. And were it only from the want of this previous work of God, he hath too great reason to believe that he hath grasped a mere shadow, and never yet known the real privilege of the sons of God.

5. Again: the Scriptures describe the being born of God, which must precede the witness that we are His children, as a vast and mighty change; a change "from darkness to light," as well as "from the power of Satan unto God;" as a "passing from death unto life," a resurrection from the dead. Thus the Apostle to the Ephesians: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (ii. 1.) And again, "When we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Verses 5, 6.) But what knoweth he, concerning whom we now speak, of any such change as this? He is altogether unacquainted with this whole matter. This is a language which he does not understand. He tells you he always was a Christian. He knows no time when he had need of such a change. By this also, if he give himself leave to think, may he know, that he is not born of the Spirit; that he has never yet known God; but has mistaken the voice of nature for the voice of God.

6. But waving the consideration of whatever he has or has not experienced in time past; by the present marks may we easily distinguish a child of God from a presumptuous

self-deceiver. The Scriptures describe that joy in the Lord which accompanies the witness of His Spirit, as an humble joy; a joy that abases to the dust, that makes a pardoned sinner cry out, "I am vile! What am I, or my father's house! Now mine eye seeth Thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes!" And wherever lowliness is, there is meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering. There is a soft, yielding spirit; a mildness and sweetness, a tenderness of soul, which words cannot express. But do these fruits attend that *supposed* testimony of the Spirit in a presumptuous man? Just the reverse. The more confident he is of the favour of God, the more is he lifted up; the more does he exalt himself; the more haughty and assuming is his whole behaviour. The stronger witness he imagines himself to have, the more overbearing is he to all around him; the more incapable of receiving any reproof; the more impatient of contradiction. Instead of being more meek, and gentle, and teachable, more "swift to hear, and slow to speak," he is more slow to hear, and swift to speak; more unready to learn of any one; more fiery and vehement in his temper, and eager in his conversation. Yea, perhaps, there will sometimes appear a kind of fierceness in his air, his manner of speaking, his whole deportment, as if he were just going to take the matter out of God's hands, and himself to "devour the adversaries."

7. Once more: the Scriptures teach, "This is the love of God," the sure mark thereof, "that we keep His commandments." (1 John v. 3.) And our Lord Himself saith, "He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me." (John xiv. 21.) Love rejoices to obey; to do, in every point, whatever is acceptable to the beloved. A true lover of God hastens to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven. But is this the character of the presumptuous pretender to the love of God? Nay, but his love gives him a liberty to disobey, to break, not keep, the commandments of God. Perhaps, when he was in fear of the wrath of God, he did labour to do His will. But now, looking on himself as "not under the law," he thinks he is no longer obliged to observe it. He is therefore less zealous of good works; less careful to abstain from

evil; less watchful over his own heart; less jealous over his tongue. He is less earnest to deny himself, and to take up his cross daily. In a word, the whole form of his life is changed, since he has fancied himself to be *at liberty*. He is no longer "exercising himself unto godliness;" "wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers," enduring hardships, "agonizing to enter in at the strait gate." No; he has found an easier way to heaven; a broad, smooth, flowery path; in which he can say to his soul, "Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry." It follows, with undeniable evidence, that he has not the true testimony of his own spirit. He cannot be conscious of having those marks which he hath not; that lowliness, meekness, and obedience: nor yet can the Spirit of the God of truth bear witness to a lie; or testify that he is a child of God, when he is manifestly a child of the devil.

8. Discover thyself, thou poor self-deceiver!—thou who art confident of being a child of God; thou who sayest, "I have the witness in myself," and therefore defiest all thy enemies. Thou are weighed in the balance and found wanting; even in the balance of the sanctuary. The word of the Lord hath tried thy soul, and proved thee to be reprobate silver. Thou art not lowly of heart; therefore thou hast not received the Spirit of Jesus unto this day. Thou art not gentle and meek; therefore thy joy is nothing worth: it is not joy in the Lord. Thou dost not keep His commandments; therefore thou lovest Him not, neither art thou partaker of the Holy Ghost. It is consequently as certain and as evident, as the oracles of God can make it, His Spirit doth not bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God. O cry unto Him, that the scales may fall off thine eyes; that thou mayest know thyself as thou art known; that thou mayest receive the sentence of death in thyself, till thou hear the voice that raises the dead, saying, "Be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath made thee whole."

9. "But how may one who has the real witness in himself distinguish it from presumption?" How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from

darkness; or the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noonday sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed? In like manner, there is an inherent, essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness; and between the light wherewith the Sun of righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light which arises only from "sparks of our own kindling:" and this difference also is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed.

10. To require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the *criteria*, or intrinsic marks, whereby we know the voice of God, is to make a demand which can never be answered; no, not by one who has the deepest knowledge of God. Suppose, when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, "Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know it was His voice? By what *criteria*, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God? Explain to me the *manner* of distinguishing this from a human or angelic voice." Can you believe, the Apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a demand? And yet, doubtless, the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But *how* he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps neither man nor angel.

11. To come yet closer: suppose God were now to speak to any soul, "Thy sins are forgiven thee,"—He must be willing that soul should know His voice; otherwise He would speak in vain. And He is able to effect this; for, whenever He wills, to do is present with Him. And He does effect it: that soul is absolutely assured, "This voice is the voice of God." But yet he who hath that witness in himself cannot explain it to one who hath it not: nor indeed is it to be expected that he should. Were there any natural medium to prove, or natural method to explain, the things of God to unexperienced men, then the natural man might discern and know the things of the Spirit of God. But this is utterly contrary to the assertion of the

Apostle, that "he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" even by spiritual senses, which the natural man hath not.

12. "But how shall I know that my spiritual senses are rightly disposed?" This also is a question of vast importance; for if a man mistake in this, he may run on in endless error and delusion. "And how am I assured that this is not my case; and that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit?" Even by the testimony of your own spirit: by "the answer of a good conscience toward God." By the fruits which He hath wrought in your spirit, you shall know the testimony of the Spirit of God. Hereby you shall know, that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit, ruling in the heart, are "love, joy, peace, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering." And the outward fruits are, the doing good to all men; the doing no evil to any; and the walking in the light,—a zealous, uniform obedience to all the commandments of God.

13. By the same fruits shall you distinguish this voice of God from any delusion of the devil. That proud spirit cannot humble thee before God. He neither can nor would soften thy heart, and melt it first into earnest mourning after God, and then into filial love. It is not the adversary of God and man that enables thee to love thy neighbour; or to put on meekness, gentleness, patience, temperance, and the whole armour of God. He is not divided against himself, or a destroyer of sin, his own work. No; it is none but the Son of God who cometh "to destroy the works of the devil." As surely therefore as holiness is of God, and as sin is the work of the devil, so surely the witness thou hast in thyself is not of Satan, but of God.

14. Well then mayest thou say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" Thanks be unto God, who giveth me to "know in whom I have believed;" who hath "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into my heart, crying, Abba, Father," and even now, "bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God!" And see, that not only thy lips, but thy life

show forth His praise. He hath sealed thee for His own. Glorify Him then in thy body and thy spirit, which are His. Beloved, if thou hast this hope in thyself, purify thyself, as He is pure. While thou beholdest what manner of love the Father hath given thee, that thou shouldest be called a child of God, cleanse thyself "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" and let all thy thoughts, words, and works be a spiritual sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God through Christ Jesus!

How does Wesley show the importance of the witness of our own spirit?

See SEC. I. 4.

What *is* the witness of God's Spirit?

"It is hard to find words," etc.—SEC. I. 7.

How does he prove that the witness of *the* Spirit must come before the witness of our own spirit?

See SEC. I. 8.

How may a child of God verify his sonship by reflection on his own consciousness?

"He that *now* loves God," etc.—SEC. I. 11.

How is "the Divine testimony manifested to the heart"?

See SEC. I. 12.

What are the Scriptural tests by which the authenticity of this inward testimony may be verified?

See SEC. I. 3, 4, 5, 6.

How does Wesley meet the demand for a philosophic explanation of the witness of the Spirit?

"To require a more minute and philosophic account," etc.—SEC. I. 10.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

DISCOURSE II.

"*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*" ROMANS viii. 16.

I. 1. NONE who believe the Scriptures to be the word of God can doubt that the importance of such a truth as this;—a truth revealed therein, not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally; but frequently, and that in express terms; but solemnly and of set purpose, as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God.

2. And it is the more necessary to explain and defend this truth, because there is a danger on the right hand and on the left. If we deny it, there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into mere formality; lest, having "a form of godliness," we neglect, if not "deny, the power of it." If we allow it, but do not understand what we allow, we are liable to run into all the wildness of enthusiasm. It is therefore needful, in the highest degree, to guard those who fear God from both these dangers, by a scriptural and rational illustration and confirmation of this momentous truth.

3. It may seem, something of this kind is the more needful because so little has been wrote on the subject with any clearness; unless some discourses on the wrong side of the question, which explain it quite away. And it cannot be doubted, but these were occasioned, at least in a great measure, by the crude, unscriptural, irrational explication of others, who "knew not what they spake, nor whereof they affirmed."

4. It more nearly concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine; be-

cause it is one grand part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by His peculiar blessing upon them in searching the Scriptures, confirmed by the experience of His children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well nigh lost and forgotten.

II. 1. But what is the witness of the Spirit? The original word, μαρτυρια, may be rendered either (as it is in several places) *the witness*, or less ambiguously, *the testimony* or *the record*: so it is rendered in our translation, (1 John v. 11,) "This is the record," the testimony, the sum of what God testifies in all the inspired writings, "that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The testimony now under consideration is given by the Spirit of God to and with our spirit: He is the person testifying. What He testifies to us is, "that we are the children of God." The immediate result of this testimony is, "the fruit of the Spirit;" namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness:" and without these, the testimony itself cannot continue. For it is inevitably destroyed, not only by the commission of any outward sin, or the omission of known duty, but by giving way to any inward sin; in a word, by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

2. I observed many years ago, "It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain the deep things of God. Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the Spirit of God works in His children. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God, to correct, soften, or strengthen the expression,) by the testimony of the Spirit, I mean, an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."

3. After twenty years' further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive how any of these expressions may be altered, so as to make them

more intelligible. I can only add, that if any of the children of God will point out any other expressions which are more clear, or more agreeable to the word of God, I will readily lay these aside.

4. Meantime let it be observed, I do not mean hereby, that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by an inward voice, although He may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose, that He always applies to the heart (though He often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But He so works upon the soul by His immediate influence, and by a strong, though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm; the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his "iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered."

5. Now what is the matter of dispute concerning this? Not whether there be a witness or testimony of the Spirit. Not whether the Spirit does testify with our spirit that we are the children of God. None can deny this, without flatly contradicting the Scriptures, and charging a lie upon the God of truth. Therefore, that there is a testimony of the Spirit is acknowledged by all parties.

6. Neither is it questioned, whether there is an *indirect* witness, or testimony, that we are the children of God. This is nearly, if not exactly, the same with the testimony of a good conscience towards God; and is the result of reason, or reflection on what we feel in our own souls. Strictly speaking, it is a conclusion drawn partly from the word of God, and partly from our own experience. The word of God says, every one who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God; experience, or inward consciousness, tells me, that I have the fruit of the Spirit; and hence I rationally conclude, "Therefore I am a child of God." This is likewise allowed on all hands, and so is no matter of controversy.

7. Nor do we assert, that there can be any real testimony of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit. We assert, on the contrary, that the fruit of the Spirit immediately springs from this testimony; not always indeed in the same degree,

even when the testimony is first given; and much less afterwards. Neither joy nor peace is always at one stay; no, nor love; as neither is the testimony itself always equally strong and clear.

8. But the point in question is, whether there be any *direct* testimony of the Spirit at all; whether there be any other testimony of the Spirit, than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit.

III. 1. I believe there is; because that is the plain, natural meaning of the text, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is manifest, here are two witnesses mentioned, who together testify the same thing; the Spirit of God, and our own spirit. The late Bishop of London, in his sermon on this text, seems astonished that any one can doubt of this, which appears upon the very face of the words. Now, "The testimony of our own spirit," says the Bishop, "is one, which is the consciousness of our own sincerity;" or, to express the same thing a little more clearly, the consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. When our spirit is conscious of this, of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, it easily infers from these premises, that we are the children of God.

2. It is true, that great man supposes the other witness to be, "the consciousness of our own good works." This, he affirms, is the testimony of God's Spirit. But this is included in the testimony of our own spirit; yea, and in sincerity, even according to the common sense of the word. So the Apostle, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world:" where, it is plain, sincerity refers to our words and actions at least as much as to our inward dispositions. So that this is not another witness, but the very same that he mentioned before; the consciousness of our good works being only one branch of the consciousness of our sincerity. Consequently here is only one witness still. If, therefore, the text speaks of two witnesses, one of these

is not the consciousness of our good works, neither of our sincerity; all this being manifestly contained in the testimony of our spirit.

3. What then is the other witness? This might easily be learned, if the text itself were not sufficiently clear, from the verse immediately preceding: "Ye have received, not the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It follows, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

4. This is farther explained by the parallel text, (Gal. iv. 6,) "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Is not this something *immediate* and *direct*, not the result of reflection or argumentation? Does not this Spirit cry, "Abba, Father," in our hearts, the moment it is given, antecedently to any reflection upon our sincerity; yea, to any reasoning whatsoever? And is not this the plain, natural sense of the words, which strikes any one as soon as he hears them? All these texts then, in their most obvious meaning, describe a direct testimony of the Spirit.

5. That the testimony of the Spirit of God must, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration: we must be holy in heart and life before we can be conscious that we are so. But we must love God before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness. Now, we cannot love God, till we know He loves us: "We love Him, because He first loved us:" and we cannot know His love to us, till His Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Till then we cannot believe it; we cannot say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

"Then, only then we feel
Our interest in His blood,
And cry, with joy unspeakable,
Thou art my Lord, my God!"

Since, therefore, the testimony of His Spirit must precede

the love of God, and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our consciousness thereof.

6. And here properly comes in, to confirm this scriptural doctrine, the experience of the children of God; the experience not of two or three, not of a few, but of a great multitude which no man can number. It has been confirmed, both in this and in all ages, by "a cloud" of living and dying "witnesses." It is confirmed by *your* experience and *mine*. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit, that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence hereof; and I immediately cried, "Abba, Father!" And this I did (and so did you) before I reflected on, or was conscious of, any fruit of the Spirit. It was from this testimony received, that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed. First, I heard,

> "Thy sins are forgiven! Accepted thou art!—
> I listen'd, and heaven sprung up in my heart."

7. But this is confirmed, not only by the experience of the children of God,—thousands of whom can declare that they never did know themselves to be in the favour of God till it was directly witnessed to them by His Spirit,—but by all those who are convinced of sin, who feel the wrath of God abiding on them. These cannot be satisfied with anything less than a direct testimony from His Spirit,—that He is "merciful to their unrighteousness, and remembers their sins and iniquities no more." Tell any of these, "You are to know you are a child, by reflecting on what He has wrought in you, on your love, joy, and peace;" and will he not immediately reply, "By all this I know I am a child of the devil? I have no more love to God than the devil has; my carnal mind is enmity against God. I have no joy in the Holy Ghost; my soul is sorrowful even unto death. I have no peace; my heart is a troubled sea; I am all storm and tempest." And which way can these souls possibly be comforted, but by a divine testimony (not that they are good, or sincere, or comformable to the Scripture in heart and life, but) that God *justifieth the ungodly?*—him that, till the moment he is justified, is all ungodly, void of all true holi-

ness; "him that worketh not," that worketh nothing that is truly good, till he is conscious that he is accepted, not for any "works of righteousness which he hath done," but by the mere, free mercy of God; wholly and solely for what the Son of God hath done and suffered for him. And can it be any otherwise, if "a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law?" If so, what inward or outward goodness can he be conscious of antecedent to his justification? Nay, is not the having nothing to pay, that is, the being conscious that "there dwelleth in us no good thing," neither inward nor outward goodness, essentially, indispensably necessary, before we can be "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ?" Was ever any man justified since his coming into the world, or can any man ever be justified, till he is brought to that point,—

> "I give up every plea beside,—
> Lord, I am damn'd; but Thou hast died?"

8. Every one, therefore, who denies the existence of such a testimony, does in effect deny justification by faith. It follows, that either he never experienced this, either he never was justified, or that he has forgotten, as St. Peter speaks, *τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν, the purification from his former sins;* the experience he then had himself; the manner wherein God wrought in his own soul, when his former sins were blotted out.

9. And the experience even of the children of the world here confirms that of the children of God. Many of these have a desire to please God: some of them take much pains to please Him: but do they not, one and all, count it the highest absurdity for any to talk of *knowing* his sins are forgiven? Which of *them* even pretends to any such thing? And yet many of them are conscious of their own sincerity. Many of them undoubtedly have, in a degree, the testimony of their own spirit, a consciousness of their own uprightness. But this brings them no consciousness that they are forgiven; no knowledge that they are the children of God. Yea, the more sincere they are, the more uneasy they generally are,

for want of knowing it; plainly showing that this cannot be known, in a satisfactory manner, by the bare testimony of our own spirit, without God's directly testifying that we are His children.

IV. But abundance of objections have been made to this; the chief of which it may be well to consider.

1. It is objected, first, "Experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine which is not founded on Scripture." This is undoubtedly true; and it is an important truth: but it does not affect the present question; for it has been shown, that this doctrine is founded on Scripture: therefore experience is properly alleged to confirm it.

2. "But madmen, French prophets, and enthusiasts of every kind, have imagined they experienced this witness." They have so; and perhaps not a few of them did, although they did not retain it long: but if they did not, this is no proof at all that others have not experienced it; as a madman's imagining himself a King, does not prove that there are no *real* Kings.

"Nay, many who pleaded strongly for this, have utterly decried the Bible." Perhaps so; but this was no necessary consequence: thousands plead for it who have the highest esteem for the Bible. "Yea, but many have fatally deceived themselves hereby, and got above all conviction."

And yet a scriptural doctrine is no worse, though men abuse it to their own destruction.

3. "But I lay it down as an undoubted truth, the fruit of the Spirit is the witness of the Spirit." Not undoubted; thousands doubt of, yea, flatly deny it: but let that pass. "If this witness be sufficient, there is no need of any other. But it is sufficient, unless in one of these cases: 1. The *total absence* of the fruit of the Spirit." And this is the case, when the direct witness is first given. 2. "The *not perceiving it.* But to contend for it in this case, is to contend for being in the favour of God, and not knowing it." True; not knowing it at that time any otherwise than by the testimony which is given for that end. And this we do contend for; we contend

that the direct witness may shine clear, even while the indirect one is under a cloud.

4. It is objected, secondly, "The design of the witness contended for is, to prove that the profession we make is genuine. But it does not prove this." I answer, the proving this is not the design of it. It is antecedent to our making any profession at all, but that of being lost, undone, guilty, helpless sinners. It is designed to assure those to whom it is given, that they are the children of God; that they are "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And this does not suppose that their preceding thoughts, words, and actions, are comformable to the rule of scripture; it supposes quite the reverse; namely, that they are sinners all over; sinners both in heart and life. Were it otherwise, God would *justify the godly;* and *their own works* would be *counted to them for righteousness.* And I cannot but fear that a supposition of our being justified by works is at the root of all these objections; for, whoever cordially believes that God *imputes* to all that are justified *righteousness without works*, will find no difficulty in allowing the witness of His Spirit, preceding the fruit of it.

5. It is objected, thirdly, "One Evangelist says, 'Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.' The other Evangelist calls the same thing 'good gifts;' abundantly demonstrating that the Spirit's way of bearing witness is by giving good gifts." Nay, here is nothing at all about *bearing witness*, either in the one text or the other. Therefore till this demonstration is better demonstrated, I let it stand as it is.

6. It is objected, fourthly, "The Scripture says, 'The tree is known by its fruits. Prove all things. Try the spirits. Examine yourselves.'" Most true. Therefore, let every man who believes he "hath the witness in himself," try whether it be of God: if the fruit follow, it is; otherwise it is not. For certainly "the tree is known by its fruit:" hereby we *prove* if it be "of God." "But the direct witness is never referred to in the book of God." Not as standing alone; not as a single witness; but as connected with the other; as giving a

joint testimony; testifying *with our spirit*, that we are children of God. And who is able to prove, that it is not *thus* referred to in this very scripture? "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" It is by no means clear, that they did not know this by a *direct* as well as a *remote* witness. How is it proved, that they did not know it, first, by an inward consciousness; and then, by love, joy, and peace?

7. "But the testimony arising from the internal and external change is constantly referred to in the Bible." It is so: and we constantly refer thereto, to confirm the testimony of the Spirit.

"Nay, all the marks *you* have given, whereby to distinguish the operations of God's Spirit from delusion, refer to the change wrought in us and upon us." This, likewise, is undoubtedly true.

8. It is objected, fifthly, that "the direct witness of the Spirit does not secure us from the greatest delusion. And is that a witness fit to be trusted, whose testimony cannot be depended on? that is forced to fly to something else, to prove what it asserts?" I answer: To secure us from all delusion, God gives us two witnesses that we are His children. And this they testify conjointly. Therefore, "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." And while they are joined, we cannot be deluded: their testimony can be depended on. They are fit to be trusted in the highest degree, and need nothing else to prove what they assert.

"Nay, the direct witness only asserts, but does not prove anything." By two witnesses shall every word be established. And when the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, as God designs it to do, then it fully proves that we are children of God.

9. It is objected, sixthly, "You own the change wrought is a sufficient testimony, unless in the case of severe trials, such as that of our Saviour upon the cross; but none of us can be tried in that manner." But you or I may be tried in such a manner, and so may any other child of God, that it

will be impossible for us to keep our filial confidence in God without the direct witness of His Spirit.

10. It is objected, lastly, "The greatest contenders for it are some of the proudest and most uncharitable of men." Perhaps some of the *hottest* contenders for it are both proud and uncharitable; but many of the *firmest* contenders for it are eminently meek and lowly in heart; and, indeed, in all other respects also,

"True followers of their lamb-like Lord."

The preceding objections are the most considerable that I have heard, and I believe contain the strength of the cause. Yet I apprehend whoever calmly and impartially considers those objections and the answers together, will easily see that they do not destroy, no, nor weaken, the evidence of that great truth, that the Spirit of God does *directly*, as well as *indirectly*, testify that we are children of God.

V. 1. The sum of all is this: the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit, that they are children of God. And it is not questioned, whether there is a testimony of the Spirit; but whether there is any *direct* testimony; whether there is any other than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. We believe there is; because this is the plain natural meaning of the text, illustrated both by the preceding words, and by the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Galatians; because, in the nature of the thing, the testimony must precede the fruit which springs from it; and because this plain meaning of the word of God is confirmed by the experience of innumerable children of God; yea, and by the experience of all who are convinced of sin, who can never rest till they have a direct witness; and even of the children of the world, who, not having the witness in themselves, one and all declare, none can *know* his sins forgiven.

2. And whereas it is objected, that experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine unsupported by Scripture;—that

madmen and enthusiasts of every kind have imagined such a witness;—that the design of that witness is to prove our profession genuine, which design it does not answer;—that the Scripture says, "The tree is known by its fruit;" "examine yourselves; prove your ownselves;" and, meantime, the direct witness is never referred to in all the book of God;—that it does not secure us from the greatest delusions;—and, lastly, that the change wrought in us is a sufficient testimony, unless in such trials as Christ alone suffered:—we answer, 1. Experience is sufficient to *confirm* a doctrine which is grounded on Scripture. 2. Though many fancy they experience what they do not, this is no prejudice to real experience. 3. The design of that witness is, to assure us we are children of God; and this design it does answer. 4. The true witness of the Spirit is known by its fruit, "love, peace, joy;" not indeed preceding, but following it. 5. It cannot be proved, that the direct as well as the indirect witness is not referred to in that very text, "Know ye not your ownselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" 6. The Spirit of God, witnessing with our spirit, does secure us from all delusion: and, lastly, we are all liable to trials, wherein the testimony of our own spirit is not sufficient; wherein nothing less that the direct testimony of God's Spirit can assure us that we are His children.

3. Two inferences may be drawn from the whole: the first, Let none ever presume to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit, which is separate from the fruit of it. If the Spirit of God does really testify that we are the children of God, the immediate consequence will be the fruit of the Spirit, even "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance." And however this fruit may be clouded for a while, during the time of strong temptation, so that it does not appear to the tempted person, while Satan is sifting him as wheat; yet the substantial part of it remains, even under the thickest cloud. It is true, joy in the Holy Ghost may be withdrawn, during the hour of trial; yea, the soul may be "exceeding sorrowful," while "the hour and power of darkness" continue; but even this is generally

restored with increase, till we rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. The second inference is, Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love, and those not delusive, but really from God, long before we have the witness in ourselves; before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have "redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance, (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God,) before we "are accepted in the Beloved," and, consequently, before we have a testimony of our acceptance: but it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise, we shall be continually crying to God, until His Spirit cry in our heart, "Abba, Father!" This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are His children. Without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received this Spirit of adoption, this "peace, which passeth all understanding," and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will "keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit, all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of Him that calleth us, to give us always what He has once given: so that there is no need that we should ever more be deprived of either the testimony of God's Spirit or the testimony of our own, the consciousness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness.

NEWRY, *April* 4, 1767. age 64 yrs.

Is the witness of the Spirit an obscure and merely incidental doctrine of Scripture?

On the contrary it is "a truth revealed therein not once only," etc. —SEC. I. 1.

Whom does it most nearly concern strongly to maintain, and at the same time carefully to guard, this doctrine?

"The Methodists."—SEC. I. 4.

What is the relative date of the second to the first discourse?

The second was written "after twenty years further consideration."—SEC. II. 3.

How does he explain the word "*impression* on the soul"?

See SEC. II. 2, 4

Is the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit peculiar to the Methodists, or is it held by the Universal Church?

"That there is a testimony of the Spirit is acknowledged by all parties."—SEC. II. 5.

What then is "the point in question" on this subject?

"The point in question is whether there be any *direct* testimony of the Spirit," etc.—SEC. II. 7.

Is the witness of the Spirit always equally strong and clear?

No. "Neither joy nor peace is always at one stay," etc.—SEC. II. 7.

What contemporary theologian does Wesley quote in favour of the direct witness of the Spirit, although he denies it?

"The late Bishop of London." (See Bishop Sherlock, Sermon VIII.)

What confirmation of this doctrine have we beside Scripture?

"The experience of the children of God," etc.—SEC. III. 6.

How does he prove the necessity of the direct witness?

"All those who are convinced of sin . . . cannot be satisfied with anything less," etc.—SEC. III. 7.

How does he show that the objection to the direct witness is, at the bottom, a legalist and Popish objection?

"I cannot but fear that a supposition of our being justified by works is at the root of all these objections," etc.—SEC. IV. 4.

Is the witness of the Spirit *separate*, as well as *distinct*, from that of our own spirit?

It is "a *joint* testimony."—SEC. IV. 6.

Is it safe to rest satisfied with either of the witnesses without the other?

No. "To secure us from delusion, God gives us two witnesses," etc.—SEC. IV. 8.

What is Wesley's summing up, and his accompanying *caution*?

See SEC. V. 1, 2.

Does Wesley discuss this subject in the spirit of a fair expositor and a sound theologian?

Yes, for he reasons entirely from Scripture and experience, and meets every objection face to face.

What is his final advice? Is it worth attending to and enforcing?

See the last paragraph.

ON SIN IN BELIEVERS

"*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*" 2 Cor. v. 17.

I. 1. IS there then sin in him that is in Christ? Does sin *remain* in one that believes in Him? Is there any sin in them that are born of God, or are they wholly delivered from it? Let no one imagine this to be a question of mere curiosity; or that it is of little importance whether it be determined one way or the other. Rather it is a point of the utmost moment to every serious Christian; the resolving of which very nearly concerns both his present and eternal happiness.

2. And yet I do not know that ever it was controverted in the primitive church. Indeed there was no room for disputing concerning it, as all Christians were agreed. And so far as I have ever observed, the whole body of ancient Christians, who have left us anything in writing, declare with one voice, that even believers in Christ, till they are "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," have need to "wrestle with flesh and blood," with an evil nature, as well as "with principalities and powers."

3. And herein our own church (as indeed in most points) exactly copies after the primitive; declaring in her Ninth Article, "Original sin is the corruption of the nature of every man, whereby man is in his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth contrary to the Spirit. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek φρονημα σαρκος, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe, yet this lust hath of itself the nature of sin."

4. The same testimony is given by all other Churches;

not only by the Greek and Romish Church, but by every Reformed Church in Europe, of whatever denomination. Indeed some of these seem to carry the thing too far; so describing the corruption of heart in a believer, as scarce to allow that he has dominion over it, but, rather, is in bondage thereto; and, by this means, they leave hardly any distinction between a believer and an unbeliever.

5. To avoid this extreme, many well-meaning men, particularly those under the direction of the late Count Zinzendorf, ran into another; affirming, that "all true believers are not only saved from the *dominion* of sin, but from the *being* of inward as well as outward sin, so that it no longer *remains* in them:" and from them, about twenty years ago, many of our countrymen imbibed the same opinion, that even the corruption of nature *is no more*, in those who believe in Christ.

6. It is true that, when the Germans were pressed upon this head, they soon allowed, (many of them at least,) that "sin did still remain *in the flesh*, but not *in the heart* of a believer:" and, after a time, when the absurdity of this was shown, they fairly gave up the point; allowing that sin did still remain, though not reign, in him that is born of God.

7. But the English, who had received it from them, (some directly, some at second or third hand,) were not so easily prevailed upon to part with a favourite opinion: and even when the generality of them were convinced it was utterly indefensible, a few could not be persuaded to give it up, but maintain it to this day.

II. 1. For the sake of these who really fear God, and desire to know "the truth as it is in Jesus," it may not be amiss to consider the point with calmness and impartiality. In doing this, I use indifferently the words, *regenerate*, *justified*, or *believers*; since, though they have not precisely the same meaning, (the first implying an inward, actual change, the second a relative one, and the third the means whereby both the one and the other are wrought,) yet they come to one and the same thing; as every one that believes, is both justified and born of God.

2. By sin, I here understand inward sin; any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ.

3. The question is not concerning *outward sin;* whether a child of God *commit sin* or no. We all agree and earnestly maintain, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." We agree, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." Neither do we now inquire whether inward sin will *always* remain in the children of God; whether sin will continue in the soul as long as it continues in the body: nor yet do we inquire whether a justified person may *relapse* either into inward or outward sin; but simply this, Is a justified or regenerate man freed from *all sin* as soon as he is justified? Is there then no sin in his heart?—nor ever after, unless he fall from grace?

4. We allow that the state of a justified person is inexpressibly great and glorious. He is born again, "not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." He is a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of the kingdom of heaven. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keepeth his heart and mind in Christ Jesus." His very body is a "temple of the Holy Ghost," and an "habitation of God through the Spirit." He is "created anew in Christ Jesus:" he is *washed*, he is *sanctified*. His heart is purified by faith; he is cleansed "from the corruption that is in the world;" "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." And so long as he "walketh in love," (which he may always do,) he worships God in spirit and in truth. He keepeth the commandments of God, and doeth those things that are pleasing in His sight; so exercising himself as to "have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men:" and he has power both over outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified.

III 1. "But was he not then freed from all sin, so that

there is no sin in his heart?" I cannot say this; I cannot believe it; because St. Paul says the contrary. He is speaking to believers, and describing the state of believers in general, when he says, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: these are contrary the one to the other." (Gal. v. 17.) Nothing can be more express. The Apostle here directly affirms that the flesh, evil nature, opposes the Spirit, even in believers; that even in the regenerate there are two principles, "contrary the one to the other."

2. Again: when he writes to the believers at Corinth, to those who were "sanctified in Christ Jesus," (1 Cor. i. 2,) he says, "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal?" (Chap. iii. 1, 3.) Now, here the Apostle speaks unto those who were unquestionably believers,—whom, in the same breath, he styles his brethren in Christ,—as being still, in a measure, carnal. He affirms, there was envying, (an evil temper,) occasioning strife among them, and yet does not give the least intimation that they had lost their faith. Nay, he manifestly declares they had not; for then they would not have been babes in Christ. And (what is most remarkable of all) he speaks of being carnal, and babes in Christ, as one and the same thing; plainly showing that every believer is (in a degree) carnal, while he is only a babe in Christ.

3. Indeed this grand point, that there are two contrary principles in believers,—nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, runs through all the Epistles of St. Paul, yea, through all the holy Scriptures; almost all the directions and exhortations therein are founded on this supposition; pointing at wrong tempers or practices in those who are, notwithstanding, acknowledged by the inspired writers to be believers. And they are continually exhorted to fight with and conquer these, by the power of the faith which was in them.

4. And who can doubt, but there was faith in the angel of the church of Ephesus, when our Lord said to him, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience: thou hast

patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted?" (Rev. ii. 2—4.) But was there, meantime, no sin in his heart? Yea, or Christ would not have added, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This was real sin which God saw in his heart; of which, accordingly, he is exhorted to *repent:* and yet we have no authority to say, that even then he had no faith.

5. Nay, the angel of the church at Pergamos, also, is exhorted to *repent*, which implies sin, though our Lord expressly says, "Thou hast not denied My faith." (Verses 13, 16.) And to the angel of the church in Sardis He says, "Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." The good which remained was *ready to die*, but was not actually dead. (Chap. iii. 2.) So there was still a spark of faith even in him; which he is accordingly commanded to *hold fast.* (Verse 3.)

6. Once more: when the Apostle exhorts believers to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," (2 Cor. vii. 1,) he plainly teaches, that those believers were not yet cleansed therefrom.

Will you answer, "He that abstains from all appearance of evil does, *ipso facto*, cleanse himself from all filthiness?" Not in anywise. For instance: a man reviles me: I feel resentment, which is filthiness of spirit; yet I say not a word. Here I "abstain from all appearance of evil;" but this does not cleanse me from that filthiness of spirit, as I experience to my sorrow.

7. And as this position, "There is no sin in a believer, no carnal mind, no bent to backsliding," is thus contrary to the word of God, so it is to the experience of His children. These continually feel an heart bent to backsliding; a natural tendency to evil; a proneness to depart from God, and cleave to the things of earth. They are daily sensible of sin remaining in their heart,—pride, self-will, unbelief; and of sin cleaving to all they speak and do, even their best actions and holiest duties. Yet at the same time they "know that they are of God;" they cannot doubt of it for a moment. They feel His Spirit clearly "witnessing with their spirit, that they are the

children of God." They "rejoice in God through Christ Jesus, by whom they have now received the atonement." So that they are equally assured, that sin is in them, and that "Christ is in them the hope of glory."

8. "But can Christ be in the same heart where sin is?" Undoubtedly He can; otherwise it never could be saved therefrom. Where the sickness is, there is the Physician,

> "Carrying on His work within,
> Striving till He cast out sin."

Christ indeed cannot *reign* where sin *reigns;* neither will He *dwell* where any sin is *allowed.* But He *is* and *dwells* in the heart of every believer, who is *fighting against* all sin; although it be not yet purified, according to the purification of the sanctuary.

9. It has been observed before, that the opposite doctrine —that there is no sin in believers—is quite new in the church of Christ; that it was never heard of for seventeen hundred years; never till it was discovered by Count Zinzendorf. I do not remember to have seen the least intimation of it, either in any ancient or modern writer; unless perhaps in some of the wild, ranting Antinomians. And these likewise say and unsay, acknowledging there is sin *in their flesh,* although no *sin in their heart.* But whatever doctrine is *new* must be *wrong;* for the *old* religion is the only *true* one; and no doctrine can be right, unless it is the very same "which was from the beginning."

10. One argument more against this new, unscriptural doctrine may be drawn from the dreadful consequences of it. One says, "I felt anger to-day." Must I reply, "Then you have no faith?" Another says, "I know what you advise is good, but my will is quite averse to it." Must I tell him, "Then you are an unbeliever, under the wrath and the curse of God?" What will be the natural consequence of this? Why, if he believe what I say, his soul will not only be grieved and wounded, but perhaps utterly destroyed; inasmuch as he will "cast away" that "confidence which hath great recompense of reward:" and having cast away his shield, how shall

he "quench the fiery darts of the wicked one?" How shall he overcome the world?—seeing "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." He stands disarmed in the midst of his enemies, open to all their assaults. What wonder, then, if he be utterly overthrown: if they take him captive at their will; yea, if he fall from one wickedness to another, and never see good any more? I cannot, therefore, by any means receive this assertion, that there is no sin in a believer from the moment he is justified; first, because it is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture;—secondly, because it is contrary to the experience of the children of God;—thirdly, because it is absolutely new, never heard of in the world till yesterday;—and, lastly, because it is naturally attended with the most fatal consequences; not only grieving those whom God hath not grieved, but perhaps dragging them into everlasting perdition.

IV. 1. However, let us give a fair hearing to the chief arguments of those who endeavour to support it. And it is, first, from Scripture they attempt to prove that there is no sin in a believer. They argue thus: "The Scripture says, Every believer is born of God, is clean, is holy, is sanctified, is pure in heart, has a new heart, is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Now, as 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' is altogether, evil, so 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,' is altogether good. Again: a man cannot be clean, sanctified, holy, and at the same time unclean, unsanctified, unholy. He cannot be pure and impure, or have a new and an old heart together. Neither can his soul be unholy, while it is a temple of the Holy Ghost."

I have put this objection as strong as possible, that its full weight may appear. Let us now examine it part by part. And, 1. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, is altogether good." I allow the text, but not the comment. For the text affirms this, and no more,—that every man who is "born of the spirit" is a spiritual man. He is so: but so he may be, and yet not be altogether spiritual. The Christians at Corinth were spiritual men; else they had been no

Christians at all: and yet they were not altogether spiritual; they were still, in part, carnal.—"But they were fallen from grace." St. Paul says, No. They were even then babes in Christ. 2. "But a man cannot be clean, sanctified, holy, and at the same time unclean, unsanctified, unholy." Indeed he may. So the Corinthians were. "Ye are washed," says the Apostle, "ye are sanctified;" namely, cleansed from "fornication, idolatry, drunkenness," and all other outward sin; (1. Cor. vi. 9—11;) and yet, at the same time, in another sense of the word, they were unsanctified; they were not washed, not inwardly cleansed from envy, evil-surmising, partiality.—"But sure, they had not a new heart and an old heart together." It it most sure they had; for, at that very time, their hearts were *truly*, yet not *entirely*, renewed. Their carnal mind was nailed to the cross; yet it was not wholly destroyed.—"But could they be unholy, while they were temples of the Holy Ghost?" Yes; that they were temples of the Holy Ghost is certain; (1 Cor. vi. 19;) and it is equally certain, they were, in some degree, carnal, that is, unholy.

2. "However, there is one scripture more which will put the matter out of question: 'If any man be' a believer 'in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' (2 Cor. v. 17.) Now, certainly a man cannot be a new creature and an old creature at once." Yes, he may: he may be partly renewed, which was the very case with those at Corinth. They were doubtless "renewed in the spirit of their mind," or they could not have been so much as "babes in Christ;" yet they had not the whole mind which was in Christ, for they *envied* one another. "But it is said expressly, 'Old things are passed away; all things are become new.'" But we must not so interpret the Apostle's words, as to make him contradict himself. And if we will make him consistent with himself, the plain meaning of the words is this: His old judgment concerning justification, holiness, happiness, indeed concerning the things of God in general, is now passed away; so are his old desires, designs, affections, tempers, and conversation. All these are undeniably become new, greatly changed from

what they were; and yet, though they are new, they are not wholly new. Still he feels, to his sorrow and shame, remains of the old man, too manifest taints of his former tempers and affections, though they cannot gain any advantage over him, as long as he watches unto prayer.

3. This whole argument, "If he is clean, he is clean;" "If he is holy, he is holy;" (and twenty more expressions of the same kind may easily be heaped together;) is really no better than playing upon words; it is the fallacy of arguing from a *particular* to a *general;* of inferring a general conclusion from particular premises. Propose the sentence entire, and it runs thus: "If he is holy *at all*, he is holy *altogether*." That does not follow: every babe in Christ is holy, and yet not altogether so. He is saved from sin; yet not entirely: it *remains*, though it does not *reign*. If you think it does not *remain*, (in babes at least whatever be the case with young men or fathers,) you certainly have not considered the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the law of God; (even the law of love laid down by St. Paul in the thirteenth of Corinthians;) and that *every* ἀνομία, disconformity to, or deviation from, this law, *is sin*. Now, is there no disconformity to this in the heart or life of a believer? What may be in an adult Christian, is another question; but what a stranger must he be to human nature, who can possibly imagine, that this is the case with every babe in Christ!

4. "But believers 'walk after the Spirit,'* (Rom viii. 1,) and the Spirit of God dwells in them; consequently, they are delivered from the guilt, the power, or, in one word, the being of sin."

These are coupled together, as if they were the same thing. But they are not the same thing. The *guilt* is one thing, the *power* another, and the *being* yet another. That believers are delivered from the *guilt* and *power* of sin, we

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* What follows for some pages is an answer to a paper published in the Christian Magazine, pp. 577—582. I am surprised Mr. Dodd should give such a paper a place in his Magazine, which is directly contrary to our Ninth Article.

allow; that they are delivered from the *being* of it, we deny. Nor does it in any wise follow from these texts. A man may have the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and may "walk after the Spirit," though he still feels "the flesh lusting against the Spirit."

5. "But 'the church is the body of Christ;' (Col. i. 24;) this implies, that its members are washed from all filthiness; otherwise it will follow, that Christ and Belial are incorporated with each other."

Nay, it will not follow from hence, "Those who are the mystical body of Christ still feel the flesh lusting against the Spirit," that Christ has any fellowship with the devil, or with that sin which He enables them to resist and overcome.

6. "But are not Christians 'come to the heavenly Jerusalem,' where 'nothing defiled can enter?'" (Heb. xii. 22.) Yes; "and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect:" that is,

> "Earth and heaven all agree,
> All is one great family."

And they are likewise holy and undefiled, while they "walk after the Spirit;" although sensible there is another principle in them, and that "these are contrary to each other."

7. "But Christians are reconciled to God. Now, this could not be, if any of the carnal mind remained; for this is enmity against God: consequently, no reconciliation can be effected, but by its total destruction."

We are "reconciled to God through the blood of the cross:" and in that moment the φρόνημα σαρκος, the corruption of nature, which is enmity with God, is put under our feet; the flesh has no more dominion over us. But it still *exists*, and it is still in its nature enmity with God, lusting against His Spirit.

8. "But 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.'" (Gal. v. 24.) They have so; yet it remains in them still, and often struggles to break from the cross. "Nay, but they have 'put off the old man with his deeds.'" (Col. iii. 9.) They have; and, in the sense

above described, "old things are passed away; all things are become new." A hundred texts may be cited to the same effect; and they will all admit of the same answer.—"But, to say all in one word, 'Christ gave Himself for the church, that it might be holy and without blemish.'" (Eph. v. 25, 27.) And so it will be in the end: but it never was yet, from the beginning to this day.

9. "But let experience speak: all who are justified do at that time find an absolute freedom from all sin." That I doubt: but, if they do, do they find it ever after? Else you gain nothing.—"If they do not, it is their own fault." That remains to be proved.

10. "But in the very nature of things, can a man have pride in him, and not be proud; anger, and yet not be angry?"

A man may have *pride* in him, may think of himself in some particulars above what he ought to think, (and so be proud in that particular,) and yet not be a proud man in his general character. He may have *anger* in him, yea, and a strong propensity to furious anger, without *giving way* to it. "But can anger and pride be in that heart, where *only* meekness and humility are felt?" No: but *some* pride and anger may be in that heart, where there is much humility and meekness."

"It avails not to say, 'These tempers are there, but they do not *reign*:' for sin cannot, in any kind or degree, exist where it does not reign; for *guilt* and *power* are essential properties of sin. Therefore, where one of them is, all must be."

Strange indeed! "Sin cannot, in any kind or degree, *exist* where it does not *reign?*" Absolutely contrary this to all experience, all Scripture, all common sense. Resentment of an affront is sin; it is ἀνομία, disconformity to the law of love. This has existed in me a thousand times. Yet it did not, and does not, *reign*.—"But *guilt* and *power* are essential properties of sin; therefore, where one is, all must be." No: in the instance before us, if the resentment I feel is not yielded to, even for a moment, there is no guilt at all, no

condemnation from God upon that account. And in this case, it has no *power*. Though it "lusteth against the Spirit," it cannot prevail. Here, therefore, as in ten thousand instances, there is *sin* without either *guilt* or *power*.

11. "But the supposing sin in a believer is pregnant with everything frightful and discouraging. It implies the contending with a power that has the possession of our strength; maintains his usurpation of our hearts; and there prosecutes the war in defiance of our Redeemer." Not so: the supposing sin is in us, does not imply that it has the possession of our strength; no more than a man crucified has the possession of those that crucify him. As little does it imply, that "sin maintains its usurpation of our hearts." The usurper is dethroned. He remains indeed where he once reigned; but remains *in chains*. So that he does, in some sense, "prosecute the war," yet he grows weaker and weaker; while the believer goes on from strength to strength, conquering and to conquer.

12. "I am not satisfied yet: he that has sin in him, is a slave to sin. Therefore you suppose a man to be justified, while he is a slave to sin. Now, if you allow men may be justified while they have pride, anger, or unbelief in them; nay, if you aver, these are (at least for a time) in all that are justified; what wonder that we have so many proud, angry, unbelieving believers?"

I do not suppose any man who is justified is a slave to sin: yet I do suppose sin remains (at least for a time) in all that are justified.

"But, if sin remains in a believer, he is a sinful man: if pride, for instance, then he is proud; if self-will, then he is self-willed; if unbelief, then he is an unbeliever; consequently, no believer at all. How then does he differ from unbelievers, from unregenerate men?" This is still mere playing upon words. It means no more than, If there is sin, pride, self-will in him, then—there is sin, pride, self-will. And this nobody can deny. In that sense then he is proud, or self-willed. But he is not proud or self-willed in the same sense that unbelievers are; that is, *governed* by pride or self-

will. Herein he differs from unregenerate men. They *obey* sin; he does not. Flesh is in them both: but they "walk after the flesh;" he "walks after the Spirit."

"But how can *unbelief* be in a believer?" That word has two meanings. It means either no faith, or little faith; either the *absence* of faith, or the *weakness* of it. In the former sense unbelief is not in a believer; in the latter, it is in all babes. Their faith is commonly mixed with doubt or fear; that is, in the latter sense, with unbelief. "Why are ye fearful," says our Lord, "O ye of little faith?" Again: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" You see here was *unbelief* in *believers;* little faith and much unbelief.

13. "But this doctrine, that sin remains in a believer; that a man may be in the favour of God, while he has sin in his heart; certainly tends to encourage men in sin." Understand the proposition right, and no such consequence follows. A man may be in God's favour though he feel sin: but not if he *yields* to it. *Having sin* does not forfeit the favour of God; *giving way to sin* does. Though the flesh in you "lust against the Spirit," you may still be a child of God; but if you "walk after the flesh," you are a child of the devil. Now this doctrine does not encourage to *obey* sin, but to resist it with all our might.

V. 1. The sum of all this is: there are in every person, even after he is justified, two contrary principles, nature and grace, termed by St. Paul, the *flesh* and the *Spirit*. Hence, although even babes in Christ are *sanctified*, yet it is only in part. In a degree, according to the measure of their faith, they are spiritual; yet in a degree they are carnal. Accordingly, believers are continually exhorted to watch against the flesh, as well as the world and the devil. And to this agrees the constant experience of the children of God. While they feel this witness in themselves, they feel a will not wholly resigned to the will of God. They know they are in Him; and yet find an heart ready to depart from Him, a proneness to evil in many instances, and a backwardness to that which is good. The contrary doctrine is wholly new; never heard

of in the church of Christ, from the time of His coming into the world, till the time of Count Zinzendorf; and it is attended with the most fatal consequences. It cuts off all watching against our evil nature, against the Delilah which we are told is gone, though she is still lying in our bosom. It tears away the shield of weak believers, deprives them of their faith, and so leaves them exposed to all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

2. Let us, therefore, hold fast the sound doctrine "once delivered to the saints," and delivered down by them, with the written word, to all succeeding generations: that, although we are renewed, cleansed, purified, sanctified, the moment we truly believe in Christ, yet we are not then renewed, cleansed, purified altogether; but the flesh, the evil nature, still *remains*, (though subdued,) and wars against the Spirit. So much the more let us use all diligence in "fighting the good fight of faith." So much the more earnestly let us "watch and pray" against the enemy within. The more carefully let us take to ourselves, and "put on, the whole armour of God;" that, although "we wrestle" both "with flesh and blood, and with principalities, and powers, and wicked spirits in high places," we "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Is the doctrine of sin in believers taught by the Church Universal?

Yes. *See* SEC. I. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Do any Christian teachers carry the doctrine too far; so as almost to obliterate the distinction between a believer and an unbeliever?

Yes; "Indeed some of these seem to carry the thing too far," etc. —SEC. I. 4.

Have any "well-meaning men" run into another extreme?

Yes. *See* SEC. I. 5.

What was the "German" subterfuge on this point?

See SEC. I. 6.

Whence did the notion arise that justification destroys the inbeing of sin?

See SEC. I. 7.

How does Wesley prove from Scripture that a child of God may have some remaining sin?

See SEC. III. 2, 3, 4, 5.

Can Christ and sin be in the same heart at the same time?

"Undoubtedly."—SEC. III. 8.

What is the difference between sin in a believer, and sin in the unregenerate?

"Christ indeed cannot *reign* where sin reigns," etc.—SEC. III. 8.

Who invented the doctrine that justification ensures *immediate* and *absolute* freedom from *indwelling* sin?

"Zinzendorf."—SEC. III. 9.

In what five words does Wesley state the condition of a babe in Christ?

"*Truly*, yet not *entirely* renewed."

Then, can a man have a new heart and an old heart at the same time?

"Yes he may," etc.

How does Wesley expose the fallacy of Zinzendorf's reasoning on this point?

See SEC. IV. 3.

What is the threefold distinction as to sin in any individual?

"The *guilt* is one thing, the *power* another, and the *being* yet another."

Can there be sin without guilt or power?

"In ten thousand instances there is."—SEC. IV. 10.

What are the evil consequences of Zinzendorf's doctrine?

"It cuts off all watching against our evil nature," etc.—SEC. V. 1.

THE REPENTANCE OF BELIEVERS.

"*Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.*" MARK i. 15.

IT is generally supposed, that repentance and faith are only the gate of religion; that they are necessary only at the beginning of our Christian course, when we are setting out in the way to the kingdom. And this may seem to be confirmed by the great Apostle, where, exhorting the Hebrew Christians to "go on to perfection," he teaches them to *leave* these "first principles of the doctrine of Christ;" "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God;" which must at least mean, that they should comparatively leave these, that at first took up all their thoughts, in order to "press forward toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

2. And this is undoubtedly true, that there is a repentance and a faith, which are, more especially, necessary at the beginning: a repentance, which is a conviction of our utter sinfulness, and guiltiness, and helplessness; and which precedes our receiving that kingdom of God, which, our Lord observes, is "within us;" and a faith, whereby we receive that kingdom, even "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

3. But, notwithstanding this, there is also a repentance and a faith (taking the words in another sense, a sense not quite the same, nor yet entirely different) which are requisite after we have "believed the Gospel;" yea, and in every subsequent stage of our Christian course, or we cannot "run the race which is set before us." And this repentance and faith are full as necessary, in order to our *continuance* and *growth* in grace, as the former faith and repentance were, in order to our *entering* into the kingdom of God.

But in what sense are we to repent and believe, after we

are justified? This is an important question, and worthy of being considered with the utmost attention.

I. And, first, in what sense are we to repent?

1. Repentance frequently means an inward change, a change of mind from sin to holiness. But we now speak of it in a quite different sense, as it is one kind of self-knowledge, the knowing ourselves sinners, yea, guilty, helpless sinners, even though we know we are children of God.

2. Indeed when we first know this; when we first find redemption in the blood of Jesus; when the love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts, and His kingdom set up therein; it is natural to suppose that we are no longer sinners, that all our sins are not only covered but destroyed.

As we do not then feel any evil in our hearts, we readily imagine none is there. Nay, some well-meaning men have imagined this not only at that time, but ever after; having persuaded themselves, that when they were justified, they were entirely sanctified: yea, they have laid it down as a general rule, in spite of Scripture, reason, and experience. These sincerely believe, and earnestly maintain, that all sin is destroyed when we are justified; and that there is no sin in the heart of a believer; but that it is altogether clean from that moment. But though we readily acknowledge, "he that believeth is born of God," and "he that is born of God doth not commit sin;" yet we cannot allow that he does not *feel* it within: it does not *reign*, but it does remain. And a conviction of the sin which *remains* in our heart, is one great branch of the repentance we are now speaking of.

3. For it is seldom long before he who imagined all sin was gone, feels there is still *pride* in his heart. He is convinced both that in many respects he has thought of himself more highly than he ought to think, and that he has taken to himself the praise of something he had received, and gloried in it as though he had not received it; and yet he knows he is in the favour of God. He cannot, and ought not to, "cast away his confidence." "The Spirit" still "witnesses with" his "spirit, that he is a child of God."

4. Nor is it long before he feels *self-will* in his heart; even a will contrary to the will of God. A will every man must inevitably have, as long as he has an understanding. This is an essential part of human nature, indeed of the nature of every intelligent being. Our blessed Lord Himself had a will as a man; otherwise He had not been a man. But His human will was invariably subject to the will of His Father. At all times, and on all occasions, even in the deepest affliction, He could say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." But this is not the case at all times, even with a true believer in Christ. He frequently finds his will more or less exalting itself against the will of God. He wills something, because it is pleasing to nature, which is not pleasing to God; and he nills (is averse from) something, because it is painful to nature, which is the will of God concerning him. Indeed, suppose he continues in the faith, he fights against it with all his might: but this very thing implies that it really exists, and that he is conscious of it.

5. Now self-will, as well as pride, is a species of *idolatry*; and both are directly contrary to the love of God. The same observation may be made concerning the *love of the world*. But this likewise even true believers are liable to feel in themselves; and every one of them does feel it, more or less, sooner or later, in one branch or another. It is true, when he first "passes from death unto life," he desires nothing more but God. He can truly say, "All my desire is unto Thee, and unto the remembrance of Thy name:" "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." But it is not so always. In process of time he will feel again, though perhaps only for a few moments, either "the desire of the flesh," or "the desire of the eye," or "the pride of life." Nay, if he does not continually watch and pray, he may find *lust* reviving; yea, and thrusting sore at him that he may fall, till he has scarce any strength left in him. He may feel the assaults of *inordinate affection*; yea, a strong propensity to "love the creature more than the Creator;" whether it be a child, a parent, a husband or wife, or "the friend that is as his own soul." He may feel, in a thousand various

ways, a desire of earthly things or pleasures. In the same proportion he will forget God, not seeking his happiness in Him, and consequently being a "lover of pleasure more than a lover of God."

6. If he does not keep himself every moment, he will again feel *the desire of the eye;* the desire of gratifying his imagination with something great, or beautiful, or uncommon. In how many ways does this desire assault the soul! Perhaps with regard to the poorest trifles, such as dress, or furniture; things never designed to satisfy the appetite of an immortal spirit. Yet, how natural is it for us, even after we have "tasted of the powers of the world to come," to sink again into these foolish, low desires of things that perish in the using! How hard is it, even for those who know in whom they have believed, to conquer but one branch of the desire of the eye, *curiosity;* constantly to trample it under their feet; to desire nothing merely because it is new!

7. And how hard is it even for the children of God wholly to conquer the *pride of life!* St. John seems to mean by this nearly the same with what the world terms "the sense of honour." This is no other than a desire of, and delight in, "the honour that cometh of men;" a desire and love of praise; and, which is always joined with it, a proportionable *fear of dispraise.* Nearly allied to this is *evil shame;* the being ashamed of that wherein we ought to glory. And this is seldom divided from the *fear of man,* which brings a thousand snares upon the soul. Now where is he, even among those that seem strong in faith, who does not find in himself a degree of all these evil tempers? So that even these are but in part "crucified to the world;" for the evil root still remains in their heart.

8. And do we not feel other tempers, which are as contrary to the love of our neighbour as these are to the love of God? The love of our neighbour "thinketh no evil." Do not we find anything of the kind? Do we never find any *jealousies,* any *evil surmisings,* any groundless or unreasonable suspicions? He that is clear in these respects, let him cast the first stone at his neighbour. Who does not sometimes feel other tempers or

inward motions, which he knows are contrary to brotherly love? If nothing of *malice*, *hatred*, or *bitterness*, is there no touch of *envy;* particularly toward those who enjoy some real or supposed good, which we desire, but cannot attain? Do we never find any degree of *resentment*, when we are injured or affronted; especially by those whom we peculiarly loved, and whom we had most laboured to help or oblige? Does injustice or ingratitude never excite in us any desire of *revenge?* any desire of returning evil for evil, instead of "overcoming evil with good?" This also shows, how much is still in our heart, which is contrary to the love of our neighbour.

9. *Covetousness*, in every kind and degree, is certainly as contrary to this as to the love of God; whether φιλαργυρία, *the love of money*, which is too frequently "the root of all evil;" or πλεονεξία, literally, a desire of *having more*, or increasing in substance. And how few, even of the real children of God, are entirely free from both! Indeed one great man, Martin Luther, used to say, he "never had any coveteousness in him" (not only in his converted state, but) "ever since he was born." But, if so, I would not scruple to say, he was the only man born of a woman, (except Him that was God as well as man,) who had not, who was born without it. Nay, I believe, never was any one born of God, that lived any considerable time after, who did not feel more or less of it many times, especially in the latter sense. We may therefore set it down as an undoubted truth, that covetousness, together with pride, and self-will, and anger, remain in the hearts even of them that are justified.

10. It is their experiencing this, which has inclined so many serious persons to understand the latter part of the seventh chapter to the Romans, not of them that are "under the law," that are convinced of sin, which is undoubtedly the meaning of the Apostle, but of them that are "under grace;" that are "justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ." And it is most certain, they are thus far right:—there does still *remain*, even in them that are justified, a *mind* which is in some measure *carnal;* (so the Apostle tells even the believers at Corinth, "Ye are carnal;") an *heart bent to*

backsliding, still ever ready to "depart from the living God;" a propensity to pride, self-will, anger, revenge, love of the world, yea, and all evil: a root of bitterness, which, if the restraint were taken off for a moment, would instantly spring up; yea, such a depth of corruption, as, without clear light from God, we cannot possibly conceive. And a conviction of all this sin *remaining* in *their hearts* is the repentance which belongs to them that are justified.

11. But we should likewise be convinced, that as sin remains in our hearts, so it *cleaves* to all our words and actions. Indeed it is to be feared, that many of our words are more than mixed with sin; that they are sinful altogether; for such undoubtedly is all *uncharitable conversation*; all which does not spring from brotherly love; all which does not agree with that golden rule, "What ye would that others should do to you, even so do unto them." Of this kind is all backbiting, all tale-bearing, all whispering, all evil-speaking, that is, repeating the faults of absent persons; for none would have others repeat his faults when he is absent. Now how few are there, even among believers, who are in no degree guilty of this; who steadily observe the good old rule, "Of the dead and the absent,—nothing but good!" And suppose they do, do they likewise abstain from *unprofitable conversation?* Yet all this is unquestionably sinful, and "grieves the Holy Spirit of God:" yea, and "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment."

12. But let it be supposed, that they continually "watch and pray," and so do "not enter into" this "temptation;" that they constantly set a watch before their mouth, and keep the door of their lips; suppose they exercise themselves herein, that *all* their "conversation may be in grace, seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers:" yet do they not daily slide into useless discourse, notwithstanding all their caution? And even when they endeavour to speak for God, are their words pure, free from unholy mixtures? Do they find nothing wrong in their very *intention?* Do they speak merely to please God, and not partly to please themselves? Is it wholly to do the will of God, and not their own

will also? Or, if they begin with a single eye, do they go on "looking unto Jesus," and talking with Him all the time they are talking with their neighbour? When they are reproving sin, do they feel no anger or unkind temper to the sinner? When they are instructing the ignorant, do they not find any pride, any self-preference? When they are comforting the afflicted, or provoking one another to love and to good works, do they never perceive any inward self-commendation: "*Now you have spoke well?*" Or any vanity,—a desire that others should think so, and esteem them on the account? In some or all of these respects, how much sin cleaves to the best *conversation* even of believers! The conviction of which is another branch of the repentance which belongs to them that are justified.

13. And how much sin, if their conscience is throughly awake, may they find cleaving to *their actions* also! Nay, are there not many of these, which, though they are such as the world would not condemn, yet cannot be commended, no, nor excused, if we judge by the word of God? Are there not many of their actions which, they themselves know, are not to the glory of God? many, wherein they did not even aim at this; which were not undertaken with an eye to God? And of those that were, are there not many, wherein their eye is not singly fixed on God? wherein they are doing their own will, at least as much as His; and seeking to please themselves as much, if not more than to please God?—And while they are endeavouring to do good to their neighbour, do they not feel wrong tempers of various kinds? Hence their good actions, so called, are far from being strictly such; being polluted with such a mixture of evil: such are their works of *mercy*. And is there not the same mixture in their works of *piety?* While they are hearing the word which is able to save their souls, do they not frequently find such thoughts as make them afraid lest it should turn to their condemnation, rather than their salvation? Is it not often the same case, while they are endeavouring to offer up their prayers to God, whether in public or private? Nay, while they are engaged in the most solemn service, even while they are at the table of

the Lord, what manner of thoughts arise in them! Are not their hearts sometimes wandering to the ends of the earth; sometimes filled with such imaginations, as make them fear lest all their sacrifice should be an abomination to the Lord? So that they are now more ashamed of their best duties, than they were once of their worst sins.

14. Again: how many *sins of omission* are they chargeable with! We know the words of the Apostle: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." But do they not know a thousand instances, wherein they might have done good, to enemies, to strangers, to their brethren, either with regard to their bodies or their souls, and they did it not? How many omissions have they been guilty of, in their duty toward God! How many opportunities of communicating, of hearing His word, of public or private prayer, have they neglected! So great reason had even that holy man, Archbishop Usher, after all his labours for God, to cry out, almost with his dying breath, "Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!"

15. But besides these outward omissions, may they not find in themselves *inward defects* without number? defects of every kind: they have not the love, the fear, the confidence they ought to have, toward God. They have not the love which is due to their neighbour, to every child of man; no, nor even that which is due to their brethren, to every child of God, whether those that are at a distance from them, or those with whom they are immediately connected. They have no holy temper in the degree they ought; they are defective in everything;—in a deep consciousness of which they are ready to cry out, with M. De Renty, "I am a ground all overrun with thorns;" or, with Job, "I am vile: I abhor myself, and repent as in dust and ashes."

16. A conviction of their *guiltiness* is another branch of that repentance which belongs to the children of God. But this is cautiously to be understood, and in a peculiar sense. For it is certain, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," that believe in Him, and, in the power of that faith, "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Yet can they no more bear the *strict justice* of God now, than before they believed. This pronounces them to be still *worthy of death*, on all the preceding accounts. And it would absolutely condemn them thereto, were it not for the atoning blood. Therefore they are thoroughly convinced, that they still *deserve* punishment, although it is hereby turned aside from them. But here there are extremes on one hand and on the other, and few steer clear of them. Most men strike on one or the other, either thinking themselves condemned when they are not, or thinking they *deserve* to be acquitted. Nay, the truth lies between: they still *deserve*, strictly speaking, only the damnation of hell. But what they deserve does not come upon them, because they "have an Advocate with the Father." His life, and death, and intercession still interpose between them and condemnation.

17. A conviction of their *utter helplessness* is yet another branch of this repentance. I mean hereby two things: first, that they are no more able now *of themselves* to think one good thought, to form one good desire, to speak one good word, or do one good work, than before they were justified; that they have still no kind or degree of strength *of their own;* no power either to do good, or resist evil; no ability to conquer or even withstand the world, the devil, or their own evil nature. They can, it is certain, do all these things; but it is not by their own strength. They have power to overcome all these enemies; for "sin hath no more dominion over them:" but it is not from nature, either in whole or in part; it is the *mere* gift of God: nor is it given all at once, as if they had a stock laid up for many years; but from moment to moment.

18. By this helplessness I mean, secondly, an absolute inability to deliver ourselves from that guiltiness or desert of punishment whereof we are still conscious; yea, and an inability to remove, by all the grace we have, (to say nothing of our natural powers,) either the pride, self-will, love of the world, anger, and general proneness to depart from God, which we experimentally know to *remain* in the heart, even of them that are regenerate; or the evil which, in spite of all

our endeavours, cleaves to all our words and actions. Add to this, an utter inability wholly to avoid uncharitable, and, much more, unprofitable, conversation: and an inability to avoid sins of omission, or to supply the numberless defects we are convinced of; especially the want of love, and other right tempers both to God and man.

19. If any man is not satisfied of this, if any believes that whoever is justified is able to remove these sins out of his heart and life, let him make the experiment. Let him try whether, by the grace he has already received, he can expel pride, self-will, or inbred sin in general. Let him try whether he can cleanse his words and actions from all mixture of evil; whether he can avoid all uncharitable and unprofitable conversation, with all the sins of omission; and, lastly, whether he can supply the numberless defects which he still finds in himself. Let him not be discouraged by one or two experiments, but repeat the trial again and again; and the longer he tries, the more deeply will he be convinced of his utter helplessness in all these respects.

20. Indeed this is so evident a truth, that well nigh all the children of God, scattered abroad, however they differ in other points, yet generally agree in this;—that although we may, "by the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body;" resist and conquer both outward and inward sin; although we may *weaken* our enemies day by day; yet we cannot *drive them out*. By all the grace which is given at justification we cannot extirpate them. Though we watch and pray ever so much, we cannot wholly cleanse either our hearts or hands. Most sure we cannot, till it shall please our Lord to speak to our hearts again, to speak the second time, "Be clean:" and then only the leprosy is cleansed. Then only, the evil root, the carnal mind, is destroyed; and inbred sin subsists no more. But if there be no such second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be *none but* a gradual work of God, (that there is a gradual work none denies,) then we must be content, as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death; and, if so, we must remain guilty till death, continually *deserving* punishment. For it is impossible

the guilt, or desert of punishment, should be removed from us, as long as all this sin remains in our heart, and cleaves to our words and actions. Nay, in rigorous justice, all we think, and speak, and act, continually increases it.

II. 1. In this sense we are to *repent*, after we are justified. And till we do so, we can go no farther. For, till we are sensible of our disease, it admits of no cure. But, supposing we do thus repent, then are we called to "believe the Gospel."

2. And this also is to be understood in a peculiar sense, different from that wherein we believed in order to justification. Believe the glad tidings of great salvation, which God hath prepared for all people. Believe that He who is "the brightness of His Father's glory, the express image of His person," is "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through Him." He is able to save you from all the sin that still remains in your heart. He is able to save you from all the sin that cleaves to all your words and actions. He is able to save you from sins of omission, and to supply whatever is wanting in you. It is true, this is impossible with man; but with God-Man all things are possible. For what can be too hard for Him who hath "all power in heaven and in earth?" Indeed His bare power to do this is not a sufficient foundation for our faith that He will do it, that He will thus exert His power, unless He hath promised it. But this He has done: He has promised it over and over, in the strongest terms. He has given us these "exceeding great and precious promises," both in the Old and the New Testament. So we read in the law, in the most ancient part of the oracles of God, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." (Deut. xxx. 6.) So in the Psalms, "He shall redeem Israel," the Israel of God, "from all his sins." So in the Prophet, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And I will put My Spirit within you, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. I will also save you from all your

uncleannesses." (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, &c.) So likewise in the New Testament, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us,—to perform the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." (Luke i. 68, &c.)

3. You have therefore good reason to believe, He is not only able, but willing to do this; to cleanse you from all your filthiness of flesh and spirit: to "save you from all your uncleannesses." This is the thing which you now long for; this is the faith which you now particularly need, namely, that the Great Physician, the lover of my soul, is willing to make me clean. But is He willing to do this to-morrow, or to-day? Let Him answer for Himself: "To-day, if ye will hear" My "voice, harden not your hearts." If you put it off till to-morrow, you harden your hearts; you refuse to hear His voice. Believe, therefore, that He is willing to save you *to-day*. He is willing to save you *now*. "Behold, now is the accepted time." He now saith, "Be thou clean!" Only believe, and you also will immediately find, "all things are possible to him that believeth."

4. Continue to believe in Him that loved thee, and gave Himself for thee; that bore all thy sins in His own body on the tree; and He saveth thee from all condemnation, by His blood continually applied. Thus it is that we continue in a justified state. And when we go on "from faith to faith," when we have faith to be cleansed from indwelling sin, to be saved from all our uncleannesses, we are likewise saved from all that *guilt*, that *desert* of punishment, which we felt before. So that then we may say, not only,

> "Every moment, Lord, I *want*
> The merit of Thy death;"

but, likewise, in the full assurance of faith,

> "Every moment, Lord, I *have*
> The merit of Thy death!"

For, by that faith in His life, death and intercession for us, renewed from moment to moment, we are every whit clean, and there is not only now no condemnation for us, but no such desert of punishment as was before, the Lord cleansing both our hearts and lives.

5. By the same faith we feel the power of Christ every moment resting upon us, whereby alone we are what we are; whereby we are enabled to continue in spiritual life, and without which, notwithstanding all our present holiness, we should be devils the next moment. But as long as we retain our faith in Him, we "draw water out of the wells of salvation." Leaning on our Beloved, even Christ in us the hope of glory, who dwelleth in our hearts by faith, who likewise is ever interceding for us at the right hand of God, we receive help from Him, to think, and speak, and act, what is acceptable in His sight. Thus does He "prevent" them that believe, in all their "doings, and further them with His continual help;" so that all their designs, conversations, and actions are "begun, continued, and ended in Him." Thus doth He "cleanse the thoughts of their hearts, by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that they may perfectly love Him, and worthily magnify His holy name."

6. Thus it is, that in the children of God, repentance and faith exactly answer each other. By repentance we feel the sin remaining in our hearts, and cleaving to our words and actions: by faith, we receive the power of God in Christ, purifying our hearts, and cleansing our hands. By repentance, we are still sensible that we deserve punishment for all our tempers, and words and actions: by faith, we are conscious that our Advocate with the Father is continually pleading for us, and thereby continually turning aside all condemnation and punishment from us. By repentance we have an abiding conviction that there is no help in us: by faith we receive not only mercy, "but grace to help in" *every* "time of need." Repentance disclaims the very possibility of any other help: faith accepts all the help we stand in need of, from Him that hath all power in heaven and earth. Repentance says, "Without Him I can do nothing:" faith says, "I can do all

things through Christ strengthening me." Through Him I can not only overcome, but expel, all the enemies of my soul. Through Him I can "love the Lord my God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength;" yea, and "walk in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of my life."

III. 1. From what has been said we may easily learn the mischievousness of that opinion,—that we are *wholly* sanctified when we are justified; that our hearts are then cleansed from all sin. It is true, we are then delivered, as was observed before, from the dominion of outward sin; and, at the same time, the power of inward sin is so broken, that we need no longer follow, or be led by it: but it is by no means true, that inward sin is then totally destroyed; that the root of pride, self-will, anger, love of the world, is then taken out of the heart; or that the carnal mind, and the heart bent to backsliding, are entirely extirpated. And to suppose the contrary is not, as some may think, an innocent harmless mistake. No: it does immense harm: it entirely blocks up the way to any farther change; for it is manifest, "they that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." If, therefore, we think we are quite made whole already, there is no room to seek any farther healing. On this supposition it is absurd to expect a farther deliverance from sin, whether gradual or instantaneous.

2. On the contrary, a deep conviction that we are not yet whole; that our hearts are not fully purified; that there is yet in us a "carnal mind," which is still in its nature "enmity against God;" that a whole body of sin remains in our heart, weakened indeed, but not destroyed; shows, beyond all possibility of doubt, the absolute necessity of a farther change. We allow, that at the very moment of justification, we are *born again:* in that instant we experience that inward change from "darkness into marvellous light;" from the image of the brute and the devil, into the image of God; from the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus. But are we then *entirely* changed? Are we *wholly* transformed into the image of Him that created us?

Far from it: we still retain a depth of sin; and it is the consciousness of this which constrains us to groan, for a full deliverance, to Him that is mighty to save. Hence it is, that those believers who are not convinced of the deep corruption of their hearts, or but slightly, and, as it were, notionally convinced, have little concern about *entire sanctification*. They may possibly hold the opinion, that such a thing is to be, either at death, or some time they know not when, before it. But they have no great uneasiness for the want of it, and no great hunger or thirst after it. They cannot, until they know themselves better, until they repent in the sense above described, until God unveils the inbred monster's face, and shows them the real state of their souls. Then only, when they feel the burden, will they groan for deliverance from it. Then, and not till then, will they cry out, in the agony of their soul,

> "Break off the yoke of inbred sin,
> And fully set my spirit free!
> I cannot rest till pure within,
> Till I am wholly lost in Thee."

3. We may learn from hence, secondly, that a deep conviction of our *demerit*, after we are accepted, (which in one sense may be termed *guilt*,) is absolutely necessary, in order to our seeing the true value of the atoning blood; in order to our feeling that we need this as much, after we are justified, as ever we did before. Without this conviction, we cannot but account the blood of the covenant *as a common thing*, something of which we have not now any great need, seeing all our past sins are blotted out. Yea, but if both our hearts and lives are thus unclean, there is a kind of guilt which we are contracting every moment, and which, of consequence, would every moment expose us to fresh condemnation, but that

> "He ever lives above,
> For us to intercede,—
> His all-atoning love,
> His precious blood, to plead."

It is this repentance, and the faith intimately connected with it, which are expressed in those strong lines,—

"I sin in every breath I draw,
Nor do Thy will, not keep Thy law
On earth, as angels do above:
But still the fountain open stands,
Washes my feet, my heart, my hands,
Till I am perfected in love."

4. We may observe, thirdly, a deep conviction of our utter *helplessness*, of our total inability to retain anything we have received, much more to deliver ourselves from the world of iniquity remaining both in our hearts and lives, teaches us truly to live upon Christ by faith, not only as our Priest, but as our King. Hereby we are brought to "magnify Him," indeed; to "give Him all the glory of His grace;" to "make Him a whole Christ, an entire Saviour; and truly to set the crown upon His head." These excellent words, as they have frequently been used, have little or no meaning; but they are fulfilled in a strong and deep sense, when we thus, as it were, go out of ourselves, in order to be swallowed up in Him; when we sink into nothing, that He may be all in all. Then, His almighty grace having abolished "every high thing which exalted itself against Him," every temper, and thought, and word, and work "is brought to the obedience of Christ."

LONDONDERRY, *April* 24, 1767. age 64

Does sin remain altogether powerless in the justified soul; without at all affecting his actions or words.

"As sin remains in our hearts, so it *cleaves* to all our words and actions," etc.—SEC. I. 11.

Is the *intention* of a justified person always *pure?*

No. SEC. I. 12.

What is Wesley's summary description of the repentance of believers?

"They are now more ashamed of their *best duties* than they were once of their *worst sins.*"

What is *implied* in the repentance of believers? What are its *elements*?

See SEC. I. 16, 17, 18.

Is it possible that the very *being* of sin should be destroyed? Have we Scripture-warrant to pray that it may, and to expect that it shall?

Assuredly. SEC. II. 2, 3.

Meanwhile, what comes between the believer and condemnation, under the sense of conscious desert of punishment?

"The merit of Christ's death."—SEC. II. 1.

What especial practical deduction does Wesley make from the fact of sin in, and the repentance of, believers?

"The absolute necessity of a further change."

What does indifference "about entire sanctification" indicate?

Imperfect conviction of the "deep corruption" of the heart.—SEC. III. 2.

What further incalculable evil results from insensibility to the strength of corruption within us even after justification?

Depreciation of the blood of Christ, and of His intercession.—SEC. III. 3.

UPON OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

DISCOURSE II.

"*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*
"*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*
"*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*"

MATT. v. 5—7.

I. 1. WHEN "the winter is past," when "the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land;" when He that comforts the mourners is now returned, "that He may abide with them for ever;" when, at the brightness of His presence, the clouds disperse, the dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty, the storms of fear flee away, the waves of sorrow subside, and their spirit again rejoiceth in God their Saviour; then is it that this word is eminently fulfilled; then those whom He hath comforted can bear witness, "Blessed," or happy, "are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

2. But who are "the meek?" Not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing; who are not discomposed at the evils that occur, because they discern not evil from good. Not those who are sheltered from the shocks of life by a stupid insensibility; who have, either by nature or art, the virtue of stocks and stones, and resent nothing, because they feel nothing. Brute philosophers are wholly unconcerned in this matter. Apathy is as far from meekness as from humanity. So that one would not easily conceive how any Christians of the purer ages, especially any of the Fathers of the Church, could confound these, and mistake

one of the foulest errors of Heathenism for a branch of true Christianity.

3. Nor does Christian meekness imply, the being without zeal for God, any more than it does ignorance or insensibility. No; it keeps clear of every extreme, whether in excess or defect. It does not destroy but balance the affections, which the God of nature never designed should be rooted out by grace, but only brought and kept under due regulations. It poises the mind aright. It holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and sorrow, and fear; preserving the mean in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right hand or the left.

4. Meekness, therefore, seems properly to relate to ourselves: but it may be referred either to God or our neighbour. When this due composure of mind has reference to God, it is usually termed "resignation;" a calm acquiescence in whatsoever is His will concerning us, even though it may not be pleasing to nature; saying continually, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." When we consider it more strictly with regard to ourselves, we style it "patience" or "contentedness." When it is exerted toward other men, then it is "mildness" to the good, and "gentleness" to the evil.

5. They who are truly meek can clearly discern what is evil; and they can also suffer it. They are sensible of everything of this kind, but still meekness holds the reins. They are exceeding "zealous for the Lord of Hosts;" but their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered, in every thought, and word, and work, with the love of man, as well as the love of God. They do not desire to extinguish any of the passions which God has for wise ends implanted in their nature; but they have the mastery of all: they hold them all in subjection, and employ them only in subservience to those ends. And thus even the harsher and more unpleasing passions are applicable to the noblest purposes; even hatred, and anger, and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it.

6. It is evident, this divine temper is not only to abide but to increase in us day by day. Occasions of exercising, and thereby increasing it, will never be wanting while we remain upon earth. "We have need of patience, that after we have done" and suffered "the will of God, we may receive the promise." We have need of resignation, that we may in all circumstances say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And we have need of "gentleness toward all men;" but especially toward the evil and unthankful: otherwise we shall be overcome of evil, instead of overcoming evil with good.

7. Nor does meekness restrain only the outward act, as the Scribes and Pharisees taught of old, and the miserable Teachers who are not taught of God will not fail to do in all ages. Our Lord guards against this, and shows the true extent of it, in the following words: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:" (Matt. v. 21, &c.:) "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."

8. Our Lord here ranks under the head of murder, even that anger which goes no farther than the heart; which does not show itself by any outward unkindness, no, not so much as a passionate word. "Whosoever is angry with his brother," with any man living, seeing we are all brethren; whosoever feels any unkindness in his heart, any temper contrary to love; whosoever is angry without a cause, without a sufficient cause, or farther than that cause requires, "shall be in danger of the judgment;" ἔνοχος ἔσται; *shall*, in that moment, *be obnoxious to* the righteous judgment of God.

But would not one be inclined to prefer the reading of those copies which omit the word εἰκῇ, *without a cause?* Is it not entirely superfluous? For if *anger at persons* be a temper contrary to love, how can there be a cause, a sufficient cause for it,—any that will justify it in the sight of God?

Anger at sin we allow. In this sense we may be angry, and yet we sin not. In this sense our Lord Himself is once recorded to have been angry: "He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He was grieved at the sinners, and angry at the sin. And this is undoubtedly right before God.

9. "And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca;"—whosoever shall give way to anger, so as to utter any contemptuous word. It is observed by commentators, that Raca is a Syriac word, which properly signifies, *empty, vain, foolish;* so that it is as inoffensive an expression as can well be used, toward one at whom we are displeased. And yet, whosoever shall use this, as our Lord assures us, "shall be in danger of the council;" rather, shall be obnoxious thereto: he shall be liable to a severer sentence from the Judge of all the earth.

"But whosoever shall say, Thou fool;"—whosoever shall so give place to the devil, as to break out into reviling, into designedly reproachful and contumelious language, "shall be obnoxious to hell-fire;" shall, in that instant, be liable to the highest condemnation. It should be observed, that our Lord describes all these as obnoxious to capital punishment. The first, to strangling, usually inflicted on those who were condemned in one of the inferior courts; the second, to stoning, which was frequently inflicted on those who were condemned by the great Council of Jerusalem; the third, to burning alive, inflicted only on the highest offenders, in the "valley of the sons of Hinnom;" Γαὶ Ἐννὸμ, from which that word is evidently taken which we translate "hell."

10. And whereas men naturally imagine, that God will excuse their defect in some duties, for their exactness in others; our Lord next takes care to cut off that vain, though common imagination. He shows, that it is impossible for any sinner to *commute* with God; who will not accept one duty for another, nor take a part of obedience for the whole. He warns us, that the performing our duty to God will not excuse us from our duty to our neighbour; that works of piety, as they are called, will be so far from commending us to God, if we

are wanting in charity, that, on the contrary, that want of charity will make all those works an abomination to the Lord.

"Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,"—on account of thy unkind behaviour toward him, of thy calling him, "Raca," or, "Thou fool;" think not that thy gift will atone for thy anger; or that it will find any acceptance with God, so long as thy conscience is defiled with the guilt of unrepented sin. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother," (at least do all that in thee lies toward being reconciled,) "and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. v. 23, 24.)

11. And let there be no delay in what so nearly concerneth thy soul. "Agree with thine adversary quickly;"—now; upon the spot; "whiles thou art in the way with him;" if it be possible, before he go out of thy sight; "lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge;" lest he appeal to God the Judge of all; "and the judge deliver thee to the officer," to Satan, the executioner of the wrath of God; "and thou be cast into prison," into hell, there to be reserved to the judgment of the great day. "Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." But this it is impossible for thee ever to do: seeing thou hast nothing to pay. Therefore, if thou art once in that prison, the smoke of thy torment must "ascend up for ever and ever."

12. Meantime "the meek shall inherit the earth." Such is the foolishness of worldly wisdom! The wise of the world had warned them again and again,—that if they did not resent such treatment, if they would tamely suffer themselves to be thus abused, there would be no living for them upon earth; that they would never be able to procure the common necessaries of life, nor to keep even what they had; that they could expect no peace, no quiet possession, no enjoyment of anything. Most true,—suppose there were no God in the world; or suppose He did not concern Himself with the children of men: but, "when God ariseth to judgment, and to

help all the meek upon earth," how doth He laugh all this heathen wisdom to scorn, and turn the "fierceness of man to His praise!" He takes a peculiar care to provide them with all things needful for life and godliness; He secures to them the provision He hath made, in spite of the force, fraud, or malice of men; and what He secures He gives them richly to enjoy. It is sweet to them, be it little or much. As in patience they possess their souls, so they truly possess whatever God hath given them. They are always content, always pleased with what they have: it pleases them, because it pleases God: so that while their heart, their desire, their joy is in heaven, they may truly be said to "inherit the earth."

13. But there seems to be a yet farther meaning in these words, even that they shall have a more eminent part in "the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" in that inheritance, a general description of which (and the particulars we shall know hereafter) St. John hath given in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven,—and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent,—and bound him a thousand years.—And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and of them which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

II. 1. Our Lord has hitherto been more immediately employed in removing the hinderances of true religion: such is pride, the first grand hinderance of all religion, which is taken away by poverty of spirit; levity and thoughtlessness, which prevent any religion from taking root in the soul, till they are removed by holy mourning: such are anger, impa-

tience, discontent, which are all healed by Christian meekness And when once these hinderances are removed, these evil diseases of the soul, which were continually raising false cravings therein, and filling it with sickly appetites, the native appetite of a heaven-born spirit returns; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness: and "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

2. Righteousness, as was observed before, is the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one; springing from, as well as terminating in, the love of God, as our Father and Redeemer, and the love of all men for His sake.

3. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after" this: in order fully to understand which expression, we should observe, first, that hunger and thirst are the strongest of all our bodily appetites. In like manner this hunger in the soul, this thirst after the image of God, is the strongest of all our spiritual appetites, when it is once awakened in the heart; yea, it swallows up all the rest in that one great desire,—to be renewed after the likeness of Him that created us. We should, secondly, observe, that from the time we begin to hunger and thirst, those appetites do not cease, but are more and more craving and importunate, till we either eat and drink, or die. And even so, from the time that we begin to hunger and thirst after the whole mind which was in Christ, these spiritual appetites do not cease, but cry after their food with more and more importunity; nor can they possibly cease, before they are satisfied, while there is any spiritual life remaining. We may, thirdly, observe, that hunger and thirst are satisfied with nothing but meat and drink. If you would give to him that is hungry all the world beside, all the elegance of apparel, all the trappings of state, all the treasure upon earth, yea, thousands of gold and silver; if you would pay him ever so much honour;—he regards it not: all these things are then of no account with him. He would still say, "These are not the things I want: give me food, or else I die." The very same is the case with every soul that truly hungers and

thirsts after righteousness. He can find no comfort in anything but this: he can be satisfied with nothing else. Whatever you offer besides, it is lightly esteemed: whether it be riches, or honour, or pleasure, he still says, "This is not the thing which I want! Give me love, or else I die!"

4. And it is as impossible to satisfy such a soul, a soul that is athirst for God, the living God, with what the world accounts religion, as with what they account happiness. The religion of the world implies three things: (1.) The doing no harm, the abstaining from outward sin; at least from such as is scandalous, as robbery, theft, common swearing, drunkenness: (2.) The doing good, the relieving the poor; the being charitable, as it is called: (3.) The using the means of grace: at least the going to church and to the Lord's supper. He in whom these three marks are found is termed by the world "a religious man." But will this satisfy him who hungers after God? No: it is not food for his soul. He wants a religion of a nobler kind, a religion higher and deeper than this. He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing, than he can "fill his belly with the east wind." True, he is careful to abstain from the very appearance of evil; he is zealous of good works; he attends all the ordinances of God: but all this is not what he longs for. This is only the outside of that religion which he insatiably hungers after. The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus; "the life which is hid with Christ in God;" the being "joined unto the Lord in one spirit;" the having "fellowship with the Father and the Son;" the "walking in the light as God is in the light;" the being "purified even as He is pure;"—this is the religion, the righteousness he thirsts after: nor can he rest, till he thus rests in God.

5. "Blessed are they who" thus "hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." They shall be filled with the things which they long for; even with righteousness and true holiness. God shall satisfy them with the blessings of His goodness, with the felicity of His chosen. He shall feed them with the bread of heaven, with the manna of His love. He shall give them to drink of His pleasures

as out of the river, which he that drinketh of shall never thirst, only for more and more of the water of life. This thirst shall endure for ever.

"The painful thirst, the fond desire,
Thy joyous presence shall remove:
But my full soul shall still require
A whole eternity of love."

6. Whosoever then thou art, to whom God hath given to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," cry unto Him that thou mayest never lose that inestimable gift,—that this divine appetite may never cease. If many rebuke thee, and bid thee hold thy peace, regard them not; yea, cry so much the more, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" "Let me not live, but to be holy as Thou art holy!" No more "spend thy money for that which is not bread, nor thy labour for that which satisfieth not." Canst thou hope to dig happiness out of the earth,—to find it in the things of the world? O trample under foot all its pleasures, despise its honours, count its riches as dung and dross,—yea, and all the things which are beneath the sun,—"for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," for the entire renewal of thy soul in that image of God wherein it was originally created. Beware of quenching that blessed hunger and thirst, by what the world calls "religion;" a religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life; thy dwelling in God, and God in thee,—the being an inhabitant of eternity; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling "within the veil," and sitting "in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

III. 1. And the more they are filled with the life of God, the more tenderly will they be concerned for those who are still without God in the world, still dead in trespasses and sins. Nor shall this concern for others lose its reward. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

The word used by our Lord more immediately implies

the compassionate, the tender-hearted; those who, far from despising, earnestly grieve for, those that do not hunger after God.

This eminent part of brotherly love is here, by a common figure, put for the whole; so that "the merciful," in the full sense of the term, are they who love their neighbours as themselves.

2. Because of the vast importance of this love,—without which, "though we spake with the tongues of men and angels, though we had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge; though we had all faith, so as to remove mountains; yea, though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and our very bodies to be burned, it would profit us nothing,"—the wisdom of God has given us, by the Apostle Paul, a full and particular account of it; by considering which we shall most clearly discern who are the merciful that shall obtain mercy.

3. "Charity," or love, (as it were to be wished it had been rendered throughout, being a far plainer and less ambiguous word,) the love of our neighbour as Christ hath loved us, "suffereth long;" is patient toward all men: it suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, infirmities, all the frowardness and littleness of faith, of the children of God; all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world. And it suffers all this, not only for a time, for a short season, but to the end; still feeding our enemy when he hungers; if he thirst, still giving him drink; thus continually "heaping coals of fire," of melting love, "upon his head."

4. And in every step toward this desirable end, the "overcoming evil with good," "love is kind:" (*χρηστεύεται*, a word not easily translated:) it is *soft, mild, benign.* It stands at the utmost distance from moroseness, from all harshness or sourness of spirit; and inspires the sufferer at once with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection.

5. Consequently, "love envieth not:" it is impossible it should; it is directly opposite to that baneful temper. It cannot be, that he who has this tender affection to all, who

earnestly wishes all temporal and spiritual blessings, all good things in this world and the world to come, to every soul that God hath made, should be pained at His bestowing any good gift on any child of man. If he has himself received the same, he does not grieve, but rejoice, that another partakes of the common benefit. If he has not, he blesses God that his brother at least has, and is herein happier than himself. And the greater his love, the more does he rejoice in the blessings of all mankind; the farther is he removed from every kind and degree of envy toward any creature.

6. Love *οὐ περπερεύεται*,—not "vaunteth not itself;" which coincides with the very next word; but rather, (as the word likewise properly imports,) *is not rash* or *hasty* in judging; it will not hastily condemn any one. It does not pass a severe sentence, on a slight or sudden view of things: it first weighs all the evidence, particularly that which is brought in favour of the accused. A true lover of his neighbour is not like the generality of men, who, even in cases of the nicest nature, "see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion." No: he proceeds with wariness and circumspection, taking heed to every step; willingly subscribing to that rule of the ancient Heathen, (O where will the modern Christian appear!) "I am so far from lightly believing what one man says against another, that I will not easily believe what a man says against himself. I will always allow him second thoughts, and many times counsel too."

7. It follows, love "is not puffed up:" it does not incline or suffer any man "to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;" but rather to think soberly: yea, it humbles the soul unto the dust. It destroys all high conceits engendering pride; and makes us rejoice to be as nothing, to be little and vile, the lowest of all, the servant of all. They who are "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love," cannot but "in honour prefer one another." Those who, having the same love, are of one accord, do in lowliness of mind "each esteem other better than themselves."

8. "It doth not behave itself unseemly:" it is not rude,

or willingly offensive to any. It "renders to all their due; fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour;" courtesy, civility, humanity to all the world; in their several degrees "honouring all men." A late writer defines good breeding, nay, the highest degree of it, politeness, "A continual desire to please, appearing in all the behaviour." But if so, there is none so well bred as a Christian, a lover of all mankind. For he cannot but desire to "please all men for their good to edification:" and this desire cannot be hid; it will necessarily appear in all his intercourse with men. For his "love is without dissimulation:" it will appear in all his actions and conversation; yea, and will constrain him, though without guile, "to become all things to all men, if by any means he may save some."

9. And in becoming all things to all men, "love seeketh not her own." In striving to please all men, the lover of mankind has no eye at all to his own temporal advantage. He covets no man's silver, or gold, or apparel: he desires nothing but the salvation of their souls: yea, in some sense, he may be said, *not to seek his own* spiritual, any more than temporal, advantage; for while he is on the full stretch to save their souls from death, he, as it were, forgets himself. He does not think of himself, so long as that zeal for the glory of God swallows him up. Nay, at some times he may almost seem, through an excess of love, to give up himself, both his soul and his body; while he cries out, with Moses, "O, this people have sinned a great sin; yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me out of the book which Thou hast written;" (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32;)—or, with St. Paul, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Romans ix. 3.)

10. No marvel that such "love is not provoked:" *οὐ παροξύνεται*. Let it be observed, the word *easily*, strangely inserted in the translation, is not in the original: St. Paul's words are absolute. "Love is not provoked:" it is not provoked to unkindness toward anyone. Occasions indeed will frequently occur; outward provocations of various kinds; but

love does not yield to provocation; it triumphs over all. In all trials it looketh unto Jesus, and is more than conqueror in His love.

It is not improbable that our translators inserted that word, as it were, to *excuse* the Apostle; who, as they supposed, might otherwise appear to be wanting in the very love which he so beautifully describes. They seem to have supposed this from a phrase in the Acts of the Apostles, which is likewise very inaccurately translated. When Paul and Barnabas disagreed concerning John, the translation runs thus, "And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder." (Acts xv. 39.) This naturally induces the reader to suppose, that they were equally sharp therein; that St. Paul, who was undoubtedly right, with regard to the point in question, (it being quite improper to take John with them again, who had deserted them before,) was as much provoked as Barnabas, who gave such a proof of his anger, as to leave the work for which he had been set apart by the Holy Ghost. But the original imports no such thing; nor does it affirm that St. Paul was provoked at all. It simply says, Ἐγένετο οὖν παροξυσμὸς,—"And there was a sharpness," *a paroxysm* of anger; in consequence of which Barnabas left St. Paul, took John, and went his own way. Paul then "chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God;" (which is not said concerning Barnabas;) "and he went through Syria and Cilicia," as he had proposed, "confirming the churches." But to return.

11. Love prevents a thousand provocations which would otherwise arise, because it "thinketh no evil." Indeed the merciful man cannot avoid knowing many things that are evil; he cannot but see them with his own eyes, and hear them with his own ears. For love does not put out his eyes, so that it is impossible for him not to see that such things are done; neither does it take away his understanding, any more than his senses, so that he cannot but know that they are evil. For instance: when he sees a man strike his neighbour, or hears him blaspheme God, he cannot either question the thing done, or the words spoken, or doubt of their being evil: yet,

οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν. The word *λογίζεται*, "thinketh," does not refer either to our seeing and hearing, or to the first and involuntary acts of our understanding; but to our *willingly thinking* what we need not; our *inferring* evil, where it does not appear; to our *reasoning* concerning things which we do not see; our *supposing* what we have neither seen nor heard. This is what true love absolutely destroys. It tears up, root and branch, all *imagining* what we have not known. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil. It is frank, open, unsuspicious; and, as it cannot design, so neither does it fear, evil.

12. It "rejoiceth not in iniquity;" common as this is, even among those who bear the name of Christ, who scruple not to rejoice over their enemy, when he falleth either into affliction, or error, or sin. Indeed, how hardly can they avoid this, who are zealously attached to any party! How difficult is it for them not to be pleased with any fault which they discover in those of the opposite party,—with any real or supposed blemish, either in their principles or practice! What warm defender of any cause is clear of these? Yea, who is so calm as to be altogether free? Who does not rejoice when his adversary makes a false step, which he thinks will advantage his own cause? Only a man of love. He alone weeps over either the sin or folly of his enemy, takes no pleasure in hearing or in repeating it, but rather desires that it may be forgotten for ever.

13. But he "rejoiceth in the truth," wheresoever it is found; in "the truth which is after godliness;" bringing forth its proper fruit,—holiness of heart, and holiness of conversation. He rejoices to find that even those who oppose him, whether with regard to opinions, or some points of practice, are nevertheless lovers of God, and in other respects unreprovable. He is glad to hear good of them, and to speak all he can consistently with truth and justice. Indeed, good in general is his glory and joy, wherever diffused throughout the race of mankind. As a citizen of the world he claims a share in the happiness of all the inhabitants of it. Because he is a man, he is not unconcerned in the welfare of any man; but

enjoys whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men.

14. This "love covereth all things:" (so, without all doubt, *πάντα στέγει* should be translated; for otherwise it would be the very same with *πάντα ὑπομένει*, "endureth all things:") because the merciful man rejoiceth not in iniquity, neither does he willingly make mention of it. Whatever evil he sees, hears, or knows, he nevertheless conceals, so far as he can without making himself "partaker of other men's sins." Wheresoever or with whomsoever he is, if he sees anything which he approves not, it goes not out of his lips, unless to the person concerned, if haply he may gain his brother. So far is he from making the faults or failings of others the matter of his conversation, that of the absent he never does speak at all, unless he can speak well. A talebearer, a backbiter, a whisperer, an evil-speaker, is to him all one as a murderer. He would just as soon cut his neighbour's throat, as thus murder his reputation. Just as soon would he think of diverting himself by setting fire to his neighbour's house, as of thus "scattering abroad arrows, fire-brands, and death," and saying, "Am I not in sport?"

He makes one only exception. Sometimes he is convinced that it is for the glory of God, or (which comes to the same) the good of his neighbour, that an evil should not be covered. In this case, for the benefit of the innocent, he is constrained to declare the guilty. But even here, (1.) He will not speak at all, till love, superior love, constrains him. (2.) He cannot do it from a general confused view of doing good, or promoting the glory of God, but from a clear sight of some particular end, some determinate good, which he pursues. (3.) Still he cannot speak, unless he be fully convinced that this very means is necessary to that end; that the end cannot be answered, at least not so effectually, by any other way. (4.) He then doeth it with the utmost sorrow and reluctance; using it as the last and worst medicine, a desperate remedy in a desperate case, a kind of poison never to be used but to expel poison. Consequently, (5.) He uses it as sparingly as possible. And this he does with fear and trembling, lest he

should transgress the law of love by speaking too much, more than he would have done by not speaking at all.

15. Love "believeth all things." It is always willing to think the best; to put the most favourable construction on everything. It is ever ready to believe whatever may tend to the advantage of any one's character. It is easily convinced of (what it earnestly desires) the innocence and integrity of any man; or, at least, of the sincerity of his repentance, if he had once erred from the way. It is glad to excuse whatever is amiss; to condemn the offender as little as possible; and to make all the allowance for human weakness which can be done without betraying the truth of God.

16. And when it can no longer believe, then love "hopeth all things." Is any evil related of any man? Love hopes that the relation is not true, that the thing related was never done. Is it certain it was?—"But perhaps it was not done with such circumstances as are related; so that, allowing the fact, there is room to hope it was not so ill as it is represented." Was the action apparently undeniably evil? Love hopes the intention was not so. Is it clear, the design was evil too?—"Yet might it not spring from the settled temper of the heart, but from a start of passion, or from some vehement temptation, which hurried the man beyond himself." And even when it cannot be doubted, but all the actions, designs, and tempers are equally evil; still love hopes that God will at last make bare His arm, and get Himself the victory; and that there shall be "joy in heaven over" this "one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

17. Lastly. It "endureth all things." This completes the character of him that is truly merciful. He endureth not some, not many, things only; not most, but absolutely *all things*. Whatever the injustice, the malice, the cruelty of men can inflict, he is able to suffer. He calls nothing intolerable; he never says of anything, "This is not to be borne." No; he can not only do, but suffer, all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. And all he suffers does not destroy his love, nor impair it in the least. It is

proof against all. It is a flame that burns even in the midst of the great deep. "Many waters cannot quench" his "love, neither can the floods drown it." It triumphs over all, It "never faileth," either in time or in eternity.

> "In obedience to what heaven decrees,
> Knowledge shall fail, and prophecy shall cease;
> But lasting charity's more ample sway,
> Nor bound by time, nor subject to decay,
> In happy triumph shall for ever live,
> And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive."

So shall "the merciful obtain mercy;" not only by the blessing of God upon all their ways, by His now repaying the love they bear to their brethren a thousand-fold into their own bosom; but likewise by "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," in the "kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world."

18. For a little while you may say, "Woe is me, that I" am constrained to "dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" You may pour out your soul, and bemoan the loss of true, genuine love in the earth: lost indeed! You may well say, (but not in the ancient sense,) "See how *these Christians* love one another!" these Christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! these Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, by ten thousands, quick into hell! these Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! these Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea robbery and murder, go not out of their streets! these Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! yea, what is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these Christian churches!—churches ("tell it not in Gath,"—but, alas! how can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks, or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and wage continual war with each other! that convert sinners by burning them alive! that are "drunk with the blood of the saints!"—Does this praise belong only to "Babylon the

Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth?" Nay, verily; but Reformed churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant churches too know to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood. And meanwhile, how do they also anathematize each other! devote each other to the nethermost hell! What wrath, what contention, what malice, what bitterness, is everywhere found among them, even where they agree in essentials, and only differ in opinions, or in the circumstantials of religion! Who follows after *only* the "things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another?" O God! how long? Shall Thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little flock! Against hope, believe in hope! It is your Father's good pleasure yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains;" and "all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our God." "They shall not" then "hurt or destroy in all His holy mountain;" but they shall call their "walls salvation, and their gates praise." They shall all be without spot or blemish, loving one another, even as Christ hath loved us.—Be thou part of the first-fruits, if the harvest is not yet. Do thou love thy neighbour as thyself. The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to lay down thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till He calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with Him for ever and ever!

Are "hatred, anger, and fear," in every case evil and mischievous?

"Even the harsher and more unpleasing passions are applicable to the noblest purposes, even hatred, anger, and fear, when engaged against sin," etc.—SEC. I. 5.

What is the force of the expression "*without a cause*"?
See SEC. I. 8.

How does Wesley explain the three degrees of condemnation?
See SEC. I. 8, 9, 10.

What else besides worldly happiness is incapable of satisfying the soul?
"What the world accounts religion."

What is Wesley's description of party-spirit?
See SEC. III. 12.

How does he translate the passage rendered in the A. V. "Charity beareth all things"?
See SEC. III. 14.

What lines of Pope embody Wesley's idea of the meaning of this passage?

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see," etc.

What is his description of the love that "*hopeth all things*"?
See SEC. III. 16.

Is there any limit to the endurance of "charity"?
See SEC. III. 17

THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, PROPERTY, AND USE OF THE LAW.

"*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*" ROM. vii. 12.

PERHAPS there are few subjects within the whole compass of religion so little understood as this. The reader of this Epistle is usually told, by "the law" St. Paul means the Jewish law; and so, apprehending himself to have no concern therewith, passes on without farther thought about it. Indeed some are not satisfied with this account; but observing the Epistle is directed to the Romans, thence infer that the Apostle in the beginning of this chapter alludes to the old Roman law. But as they have no more concern with this, than with the ceremonial law of Moses, so they spend not much thought on what they suppose is occasionally mentioned barely to illustrate another thing.

2. But a careful observer of the Apostle's discourse will not be content with these light explications of it. And the more he weighs the words, the more convinced he will be, that St. Paul, by "the law" mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of Rome, or the ceremonial law of Moses. This will clearly appear to all who attentively consider the tenor of his discourse. He begins the chapter, "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,)" to them who have been instructed therein from their youth, "that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" (What! the law of Rome only, or the ceremonial law? No, surely; but the moral law.) "For," to give a plain instance, "the woman which hath a husband is bound by the" moral "law to her husband so long as he liveth;

but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." From this particular instance the Apostle proceeds to draw that general conclusion: "Wherefore, my brethren," by a plain parity of reason, "ye also are become dead to the law," the whole Mosaic institution, "by the body of Christ," offered for you, and bringing you under a new dispensation: "That ye should" without any blame "be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead;" and hath thereby given proof of His authority to make the change; "that we should bring forth fruit unto God." And this we can do now, whereas before we could not: "for when we were in the flesh," under the power of the flesh, that is, of corrupt nature, which was necessarily the case till we knew the power of Christ's resurrection, "the motions of sins, which were by the law,"—which were shown and inflamed by the Mosaic law, not conquered,—"did work in our members,"—broke out various ways,—"to bring forth fruit unto death." "But now we are delivered from the law;" from that whole moral, as well as ceremonial economy; "that being dead whereby we were held;"—that entire institution being now as it were dead, and having no more authority over us than the husband, when dead, hath over his wife: "That we should serve Him,"—who died for us and rose again, "in newness of spirit;"—in a new spiritual dispensation; "and not in the oldness of the letter;"—with a bare outward service, according to the letter of the Mosaic institution. (Verses 1—6.)

3. The Apostle, having gone thus far in proving that the Christian had set aside the Jewish dispensation, and that the moral law itself, though it could never pass away, yet stood on a different foundation from what it did before,—now stops to propose and answer an objection: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" So some might infer from a misapprehension of those words, "the motions of sins, which

were by the law." "God forbid!" saith the Apostle, that we should say so. Nay, the law is an irreconcilable enemy to sin; searching it out, wherever it is. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust," evil desire, to be sin, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Verse 7.) After opening this farther, in the four following verses, he subjoins this general conclusion, with regard more especially to the moral law, from which the preceding instance was taken: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

4. In order to explain and enforce these deep words, so little regarded, because so little understood, I shall endeavour to show, first, the original of this law; secondly, the nature thereof; thirdly, the properties,—that it is holy, and just, and good; and, fourthly, the uses of it.

I. 1. I shall, first, endeavour to show the original of the moral law, often called "the law," by way of eminence. Now this is not, as some may have possibly imagined, of so late an institution as the time of Moses. Noah declared it to men long before that time, and Enoch before him. But we may trace its original higher still, even beyond the foundation of the world; to that period, unknown indeed to men, but doubtless enrolled in the annals of eternity, when "the morning stars" first "sang together," being newly called into existence. It pleased the great Creator to make these, His first-born sons, intelligent beings, that they might know Him that created them. For this end He endued them with understanding, to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; and, as a necessary result of this, with liberty, a capacity of choosing the one and refusing the other. By this they were, likewise, enabled to offer Him a free and willing service; a service rewardable in itself, as well as most acceptable to their gracious Master.

2. To employ all the faculties which He had given them, particularly their understanding and liberty, He gave them a law, a complete model of all truth, so far as is intelligible to a finite being; and of all good, so far as angelic minds were

capable of embracing it. It was also the design of their beneficent Governor herein to make way for a continual increase of their happiness; seeing every instance of obedience to that law would both add to the perfection of their nature, and entitle them to an higher reward, which the righteous Judge would give in its season.

3. In like manner, when God, in His appointed time, had created a new order of intelligent beings, when He had raised man from the dust of the earth, breathed into him the breath of life, and caused him to become a living soul, endued with power to choose good or evil; He gave to this free, intelligent creature the same law as to His first-born children;—not wrote, indeed, upon tables of stone, or any corruptible substance, but engraven on his heart by the finger of God; wrote in the inmost spirit both of men and of angels; to the intent it might never be far off, never hard to be understood, but always at hand, and always shining with clear light, even as the sun in the midst of heaven.

4. Such was the original of the law of God. With regard to man, it was coeval with his nature; but with regard to the elder sons of God, it shone in its full splendour "or ever the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made." But it was not long before man rebelled against God, and, by breaking this glorious law, well nigh effaced it out of his heart; the eyes of his understanding being darkened in the same measure as his soul was "alienated from the life of God." And yet God did not despise the work of His own hands; but, being reconciled to man through the Son of His love, He, in some measure, re-inscribed the law on the heart of His dark, sinful creature. "He" again "showed thee, O man, what is good," although not as in the beginning, "even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

5. And this He showed, not only to our first parents, but likewise to all their posterity, by "that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world." But, notwithstanding this light, all flesh had, in process of time, "corrupted their way before Him;" till He chose out of man-

kind a peculiar people, to whom He gave a more perfect knowledge of His law: and the heads of this, because they were slow of understanding, He wrote on two tables of stone, which He commanded the fathers to teach their children, through all succeeding generations.

6. And thus it is, that the law of God is now made known to them that know not God. They hear, with the hearing of the ear, the things that were written aforetime for our instruction. But this does not suffice: they cannot, by this means, comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof. God alone can reveal this by His Spirit. And so He does to all that truly believe, in consequence of that gracious promise made to all the Israel of God: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. And this shall be the covenant that I will make; I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jer. xxxi. 31, &c.)

II. 1. The nature of that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in paradise, and which God has so mercifully promised to write afresh in the hearts of all true believers, was the second thing I proposed to show. In order to which, I would first observe, that although the "law" and the "commandment" are sometimes differently taken, (the commandment meaning but a part of the law,) yet in the text they are used as equivalent terms, implying one and the same thing. But we cannot understand here, either by one or the other, the ceremonial law. It is not the ceremonial law, whereof the Apostle says, in the words above recited, "I had not known sin, but by the law:" this is too plain to need a proof. Neither is it the ceremonial law which saith, in the words immediately subjoined, "Thou shalt not covet." Therefore the ceremonial law has no place in the present question.

2. Neither can we understand by "the law" mentioned in the text the Mosaic dispensation. It is true, the word is sometimes so understood; as when the Apostle says, speaking to

the Galatians, (iii. 17,) "The covenant that was confirmed before;" namely, with Abraham, the father of the faithful, "the law," that is, the Mosaic dispensation, "which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But it cannot be understood so in the text; for the Apostle never bestows so high commendations as these upon that imperfect and shadowy dispensation. He nowhere affirms the Mosaic to be a spiritual law; or, that it is holy, and just, and good. Neither is it true, that God will write that law in the hearts of those whose iniquities He remembers no more. It remains, that "the law," eminently so termed, is no other than the moral law.

3. Now, this law is an incorruptible picture of the High and Holy ONE that inhabiteth eternity. It is He whom, in His essence, no man hath seen, or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled; God manifested to His creatures as they are able to bear it; manifested to give, and not to destroy, life,—that they may see God and live. It is the heart of God disclosed to man. Yea, in some sense, we may apply to this law what the Apostle says of His Son: it is ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ,—*the streaming forth* or *out-beaming of His glory, the express image of His person.*

4. "If virtue," said the ancient Heathen, "could assume such a shape as that we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would she excite in us!" If virtue could do this! It is done already. The law of God is all virtues in one, in such a shape as to be beheld with open face by all those whose eyes God hath enlightened. What is the law but divine virtue and wisdom assuming a visible form? What is it but the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity, now drawn forth and clothed with such a vehicle as to appear even to human understanding.

5. If we survey the law of God in another point of view, it is supreme, unchangeable reason; it is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created. I am sensible, what a shortness, and even

impropriety, there is, in these and all other human expressions, when we endeavour by these faint pictures to shadow out the deep things of God. Nevertheless, we have no better, indeed no other way, during this our infant state of existence. As we now "know" but "in part," so we are constrained to "prophesy," that is, speak of the things of God, "in part" also. "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness," while we are in this house of clay. While I am "a child," I must "speak as a child:" but I shall soon "put away childish things;" for "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."

6. But to return. The law of God (speaking after the manner of men) is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature; yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of His essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High. It is the delight and wonder of cherubim and seraphim, and all the company of heaven, and the glory and joy of every wise believer, every well-instructed child of God upon earth.

III. 1. Such is the nature of the ever-blessed law of God. I am, in the third place, to show the properties of it:—not all; for that would exceed the wisdom of an angel; but those only which are mentioned in the text. These are three: it is holy, just, and good. And, first, the law is holy.

2. In this expression the Apostle does not appear to speak of its effects, but rather of its nature: as St. James, speaking of the same thing under another name, says, "The wisdom from above" (which is no other than this law, written in our heart) "is first pure;" (iii. 17;) ἁγνή,—*chaste, spotless;* eternally and essentially holy. And, consequently, when it is transcribed into the life, as well as the soul, it is (as the same Apostle terms it, i. 27) θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος,—*pure religion and undefiled;* or, the pure, clean, unpolluted worship of God.

3. It is, indeed, in the highest degree, pure, chaste, clean, holy. Otherwise it could not be the immediate offspring, and much less the express resemblance, of God, who is essential

holiness. It is pure from all sin, clean and unspotted from any touch of evil. It is a chaste virgin, incapable of any defilement, of any mixture with that which is unclean or unholy. It has no fellowship with sin of any kind: for "what communion hath light with darkness?" As sin is, in its very nature, enmity to God, so His law is enmity to sin.

4. Therefore it is that the Apostle rejects with such abhorrence that blasphemous supposition, that the law of God is either sin itself, or the cause of sin. God forbid that we should suppose it is the cause of sin, because it is the discoverer of it; because it detects the hidden things of darkness, and drags them out into open day. It is true, by this means, (as the Apostle observes, Romans vii. 13,) "sin appears to be sin." All its disguises are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity. It is true likewise, that "sin, by the commandment, becomes exceeding sinful:" being now committed against light and knowledge, being stripped even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loses its excuse, as well as disguise, and becomes far more odious both to God and man. Yea, and it is true, that "sin worketh death by that which is good;" which in itself is pure and holy. When it is dragged out to light, it rages the more: when it is restrained, it bursts out with great violence. Thus the Apostle, (speaking in the person of one who was convinced of sin, but not yet delivered from it,) "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment" detecting and endeavouring to restrain it, disdained the restraint, and so much the more "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;" (verse 8;) all manner of foolish and hurtful desire, which that commandment sought to restrain. Thus, "when the commandment came, sin revived:" (verse 9:) it fretted and raged the more. But this is no stain on the commandment. Though it is abused, it cannot be defiled. This only proves that "the heart of man is desperately wicked." But "the law" of God "is holy" still.

5. And it is, secondly, just. It renders to all their due. It prescribes exactly what is right, precisely what ought to be done, said, or thought, both with regard to the Author of our

being, with regard to ourselves, and with regard to every creature which He has made. It is adapted, in all respects, to the nature of things, of the whole universe, and every individual. It is suited to all the circumstances of each, and to all their mutual relations, whether such as have existed from the beginning, or such as commenced in any following period. It is exactly agreeable to the fitnesses of things, whether essential or accidental. It clashes with none of these in any degree; nor is ever unconnected with them. If the word be taken in that sense, there is nothing arbitrary in the law of God. Although still the whole and every part thereof is totally dependent upon His will; so that, "Thy will be done," is the supreme, universal law both in earth and heaven.

6. "But is the will of God the cause of His law? Is His will the original of right and wrong? Is a thing *therefore* right, because God wills it? or does He will it because it is right?"

I fear this celebrated question is more curious than useful. And perhaps in the manner it is usually treated of, it does not so well consist with the regard that is due from a creature to the Creator and Governor of all things. It is hardly decent for man to call the supreme God to give an account to him. Nevertheless, with awe and reverence we may speak a little. The Lord pardon us if we speak amiss!

7. It seems then, that the whole difficulty arises from considering God's will as distinct from God: otherwise it vanishes away. For none can doubt but God is the cause of the law of God. But the will of God is God Himself. It is God considered as willing thus or thus. Consequently, to say that the will of God, or that God Himself, is the cause of the law, is one and the same thing.

8. Again: If the law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends upon the nature and fitnesses of things, and on their essential relations to each other; (I do not say, their eternal relations; because the eternal relation of things existing in time, is little less than a contradiction;) if, I say, this depends on the nature and relations of things, then it must

depend on God, or the will of God; because those things themselves, with all their relations, are the works of His hands. By His will, "for His pleasure" alone, they all "are and were created."

9. And yet it may be granted, (which is probably all that a considerate person would contend for,) that in every particular case, God wills this or this, (suppose, that men should honour their parents,) because it is right, agreeable to the fitness of things, to the relation wherein they stand.

10. The law then is right and just concerning all things. And it is good as well as just. This we may easily infer from the fountain whence it flowed. For what was this, but the goodness of God? What but goodness alone inclined Him to impart that divine copy of Himself to the holy angels? To what else can we impute His bestowing upon man the same transcript of His own nature? And what but tender love constrained Him afresh to manifest His will to fallen man,—either to Adam, or any of his seed, who like him were "come short of the glory of God?" Was it not mere love that moved Him to publish His law after the understandings of men were darkened? and to send His Prophets to declare that law to the blind, thoughtless children of men? Doubtless His goodness it was which raised up Enoch and Noah to be Preachers of righteousness; which caused Abraham, His friend, and Isaac, and Jacob, to bear witness to His truth. It was His goodness alone, which, when "darkness had covered the earth, and thick darkness the people," gave a written law to Moses, and, through him, to the nation whom He had chosen. It was love which explained these living oracles by David and all the Prophets that followed; until, when the fulness of time was come, He sent His only-begotten Son, "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil," confirm every jot and tittle thereof; till, having wrote it in the hearts of all His children, and put all His enemies under His feet, "He shall deliver up" His mediatorial "kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all."

11. And this law, which the goodness of God gave at first, and has preserved through all ages, is, like the fountain from

whence it springs, full of goodness and benignity: it is mild and kind; it is, as the Psalmist expresses it, "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." It is winning and amiable. It includes "whatsoever things are lovely or of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise" before God and His holy angels, they are all comprised in this; wherein are hid all the treasures of the divine wisdom, and knowledge, and love.

12. And it is good in its effects, as well as in its nature. As the tree is, so are its fruits. The fruits of the law of God written in the heart are "righteousness, and peace, and assurance for ever." Or rather, the law itself is righteousness, filling the soul with a peace which passeth all understanding, and causing us to rejoice evermore, in the testimony of a good conscience toward God. It is not so properly a pledge, as "an earnest, of our inheritance," being a part of the purchased possession. It is God made manifest in our flesh, and bringing with Him eternal life; assuring us by that pure and perfect love, that we are "sealed unto the day of redemption;" that He will "spare us as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," "in the day when He maketh up His jewels;" and that there remaineth for us "a crown of glory which fadeth not away."

IV. 1. It remains only to show, in the fourth and last place, the uses of the law. And the first use of it, without question, is, to convince the world of sin. This is, indeed, the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost; who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means it pleaseth Him, however insufficient in themselves, or even improper, to produce such an effect. And, accordingly, some there are whose hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in sickness or in health, without any visible cause, or any outward means whatever; and others (one in an age) have been awakened to a sense of the "wrath of God abiding on them," by hearing that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. It is this which, being set

home on the conscience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. It is more especially this part of the word of God which is ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργής,—*quick and powerful*, full of life and energy, "and sharper than any two-edged sword." This, in the hand of God and of those whom He hath sent, pierces through all the folds of a deceitful heart, and "divides asunder even the soul and the spirit;" yea, as it were, the very "joints and marrow." By this is the sinner discovered to himself. All his fig-leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is "wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." The law flashes conviction on every side. He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His "mouth is stopped," and he stands "guilty before God."

2. To slay the sinner is, then, the first use of the law; to destroy the life and strength wherein he trusts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under the sentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all spiritual life, "dead in trespasses and sins." The second use of it is, to bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live. It is true, in performing both these offices, it acts the part of a severe schoolmaster. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all. It is the spirit of love which, by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner, stripped of all, to cry out in the bitterness of his soul, or groan in the depth of his heart,

> "I give up every plea beside,—
> Lord, I am damn'd; but Thou hast died."

3. The third use of the law is, to keep us alive. It is the grand means whereby the blessed Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God.

I am afraid this great and important truth is little understood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of these lay it down as an unquestioned truth, that when we come to Christ, we have done with the law;

and that, in this sense, "Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth." "The end of the law:"—so He is, "for righteousness," for justification, "to every one that believeth." Herein the law is at an end. It justifies none, but only brings them to Christ; who is also, in another respect, the end or scope of the law,—the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to Him, it has yet a farther office, namely, to keep us with Him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they see of its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, to exhort one another so much the more,—

"Closer and closer let us cleave
To His beloved embrace;
Expect His fulness to receive,
And grace to answer grace."

4. Allowing then, that every believer has done with the law, as it means the Jewish ceremonial law, or the entire Mosaic dispensation; (for these Christ hath taken out of the way;) yea, allowing we have done with the moral law, as a means of procuring our justification; for we are "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus;" yet, in another sense, we have not done with this law: for it is still of unspeakable use, first, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains both in our hearts and lives, and thereby keeping us close to Christ, that His blood may cleanse us every moment; secondly, in deriving strength from our Head into His living members, whereby He empowers them to do what His law commands; and, thirdly, in confirming our hope of whatsoever it commands and we have not yet attained, —of receiving grace upon grace, till we are in actual possession of the fulness of His promises.

5. How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer! While he cries out, "O what love have I unto Thy law! all the day long is my study in it;" he sees daily, in that divine mirror, more and more of his own sinfulness. He sees more and more clearly, that he is still a sinner in all things,—that neither his heart nor his ways are right before God; and that every moment sends him to Christ.

This shows him the meaning of what is written, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead," (the type of our great High Priest,) "that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts;" (so far are our prayers or holy things from atoning for the rest of our sin;) "and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." (Exodus xxviii. 36, 38.)

6. To explain this by a single instance: the law says, "Thou shalt not kill;" and hereby, (as our Lord teaches,) forbids not only outward acts, but every unkind word or thought. Now, the more I look into this perfect law, the more I feel how far I come short of it; and the more I feel this, the more I feel my need of His blood to atone for all my sin, and of His Spirit to purify my heart, and make me "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

7. Therefore I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ; seeing I now want it as much to keep me to Christ, as I ever wanted it to bring me to Him. Otherwise, this "evil heart of unbelief" would immediately "depart from the living God." Indeed each is continually sending me to the other,—the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ; on the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me "above gold or precious stones;" seeing I know every part of it is a gracious promise which my Lord will fulfil in its season.

8. Who art thou then, O man, that "judgest the law, and speakest evil of the law?"—that rankest it with sin, Satan, and death, and sendest them all to hell together? The Apostle James esteemed judging or "speaking evil of the law" so enormous a piece of wickedness, that he knew not how to aggravate the guilt of judging our brethren more, than by showing it included this. "So now," says he, "thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge!" A judge of that which God hath ordained to judge thee! So thou hast set up thyself in the judgment seat of Christ, and cast down the

rule whereby He will judge the world! O take knowledge what advantage Satan hath gained over thee; and, for the time to come, never think or speak lightly of, much less dress up as a scarecrow, this blessed instrument of the grace of God. Yea, love and value it for the sake of Him from whom it came, and of Him to whom it leads. Let it be thy glory and joy, next to the cross of Christ. Declare its praise, and make it honourable before all men.

9. And if thou art thoroughly convinced that it is the offspring of God, that it is the copy of all His imitable perfections, and that it is "holy, and just, and good," but especially to them that believe; then, instead of casting it away as a polluted thing, see that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowliness, meekness, and purity, forsake thee. "Bind it about thy neck; write it on the table of thy heart." Keep close to the law, if thou wilt keep close to Christ; hold it fast; let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till all the "righteousness of the law is fulfilled in thee," and thou art "filled with all the fulness of God."

10. And if thy Lord hath already fulfilled His word, if He hath already "written His law in thy heart," then "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free." Thou art not only made free from Jewish ceremonies, from the guilt of sin, and the fear of hell; (these are so far from being the whole, that they are the least and lowest part of Christian liberty;) but, what is infinitely more, from the power of sin, from serving the devil, from offending God. O stand fast in this liberty: in comparison of which, all the rest is not even worthy to be named! Stand fast in loving God with all thy heart, and serving Him with all thy strength! This is perfect freedom; thus to keep His law, and to walk in all His commandments blameless. "Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." I do not mean of Jewish bondage; nor yet of bondage to the fear of hell: these, I trust, are far from thee. But beware of being entangled again with the yoke of sin, of any inward or out-

ward transgression of the law. Abhor sin far more than death or hell; abhor sin itself, far more than the punishment of it. Beware of the bondage of pride, of desire, of anger; of every evil temper, or word, or work. "Look unto Jesus;" and in order thereto, look more and more into the perfect law, "the law of liberty;" and "continue therein;" so shalt thou daily "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

From *what* "law" is it that believers are "delivered" by the death of Christ?

"That whole moral as well as ceremonial economy," etc.—SEC. 2.

In what *sense* are believers "delivered from the law"?

Those who are "in Christ," serve God now "in newness of spirit;"—in a *new spiritual dispensation;* "and not in the oldness of the letter;—with a bare outward service," etc.—SEC. 2.

What is "the original" of the law?

See SEC. I. 1.

When and *how* was the law first given to man?

See SEC. I. 3.

Has the law on the heart been quite lost since the fall?

No. God "in some measure *reinscribed* the law on the heart of His dark, sinful creature."

What relation do the Ten Commandments bear to the law written on the heart?

See SEC. I. 5.

How does Wesley demonstrate that the law from which Christ delivers believers is not merely the ceremonial law?

See SEC. II. 2.

Quote Wesley's definition of the law of God.

"It is supreme, unchangeable reason; it is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things."

How does he unfold the justice of the law?

See SEC. III. 5.

How does he settle the great question of the origin of *right* and *wrong*?

See SEC. III. 6, 7, 8.

What are "the uses of the law"?

See SEC. IV. 1, 2.

How does Wesley steer triumphantly between legality on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other?

See SEC. IV. 3, 4.

How does he prove that our religious performances cannot atone for our sins?

See SEC. IV. 5, 6.

Can a believer do without the law?

"*I cannot spare the law one moment, no more* than I can spare Christ; seeing I now want it as much to keep me to Christ, as I ever wanted it to bring me to Him," etc.—SEC. IV. 7, 8.

What is the rank of the law in the kingdom of grace?

"Next to the cross of Christ."

SATAN'S DEVICES.

"*We are not ignorant of his devices.*" 2 Cor. ii. 11.

THE devices whereby the subtle god of this world labours to destroy the children of God—or at least to torment whom he cannot destroy, to perplex and hinder them in running the race which is set before them—are numberless as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea-shore. But it is of one of them only that I now propose to speak, (although exerted in various ways,) whereby he endeavours to divide the Gospel against itself, and by one part of it to overthrow the other.

2. The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the hearts of all that repent and believe the Gospel, is no other than "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Every babe in Christ knows we are made partakers of these, the very hour that we believe in Jesus. But these are only the first-fruits of His Spirit; the harvest is not yet. Although these blessings are inconceivably great, yet we trust to see greater than these. We trust to love the Lord our God, not only as we do now, with a weak, though sincere affection, but "with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength." We look for power to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks;" knowing, "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us."

3. We expect to be "made perfect in love;" in that which casts out all painful fear, and all desire but that of glorifying Him we love, and of loving and serving Him more and more. We look for such an increase in the experimental knowledge and love of God our Saviour, as will enable us always "to walk in the light as He is in the light." We believe the

whole mind will be in us "which was also in Christ Jesus;" that we shall love every man so as to be ready to lay down our life for his sake; so as, by this love, to be freed from anger, and pride, and from every unkind affection. We expect to be "cleansed from all our idols," "from all filthiness," whether "of flesh or spirit;" to be "saved from all our uncleannesses," inward or outward; to be purified "as He is pure."

4. We trust in His promise who cannot lie, that the time will surely come, when, in every word and work, we shall do His blessed will on earth, as it is done in heaven; when all our conversation shall be seasoned with salt, all meet to minister grace to the hearers; when, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, it shall be done to the glory of God; when all our words and deeds shall be "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God, even the Father, through Him."

5. Now this is the grand device of Satan, to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or at least to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. It is therefore my present design, first, to point out the several ways whereby he endeavours this: and, secondly, to observe how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked one; how we may rise the higher, by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

I. I am, first, to point out the several ways whereby Satan endeavours to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or at east to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. And, 1. He endeavours to damp our joy in the Lord, by the consideration of our own vileness, sinfulness, unworthiness; added to this, that there must be a far greater change than is yet, or we cannot see the Lord. If we knew we must remain as we are, even to the day of our death, we might possibly draw a kind of comfort, poor as it was, from that necessity. But as we know we need not remain in this state, as we are assured there is a greater change to come, and that unless sin be all done away in this life, we cannot see God in glory,—that subtle adversary often damps the joy we should

otherwise feel in what we have already attained, by a perverse representation of what we have not attained, and the absolute necessity of attaining it. So that we cannot rejoice in what we have, because there is more which we have not. We cannot rightly taste the goodness of God, who hath done so great things for us, because there are so much greater things which, as yet, He hath not done. Likewise, the deeper conviction God works in us of our present unholiness, and the more vehement desire we feel in our heart of the entire holiness He hath promised, the more are we tempted to think lightly of the present gifts of God, and to undervalue what we have already received, because of what we have not received.

2. If he can prevail thus far, if he can damp our joy, he will soon attack our peace also. He will suggest, "Are you fit to see God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How, then, can you flatter yourself, so as to imagine He beholds you with approbation? God is holy: you are unholy. What communion hath light with darkness? How is it possible that you, unclean as you are, should be in a state of acceptance with God? You see indeed the mark, the prize of your high calling; but do you not see it is afar off? How can you presume then to think that all your sins are already blotted out? How can this be, until you are brought nearer to God, until you bear more resemblance to Him?" Thus will he endeavour not only to shake your peace, but even to overturn the very foundation of it; to bring you back, by insensible degrees, to the point from whence you set out first, even to seek for justification by works, or by your own righteousness,—to make something in you the ground of your acceptance, or, at least, necessarily previous to it.

3. Or, if we hold fast, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ;" and, "I am justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus;" yet he will not cease to urge, "But the tree is known by its fruits: and have you the fruits of justification? Is that mind in you which was in Christ Jesus? Are you dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness? Are you made

conformable to the death of Christ, and do you know the power of His resurrection?" And then, comparing the small fruits we feel in our souls with the fulness of the promises, we shall be ready to conclude, "Surely God hath not said that my sins are forgiven me! Surely I have not received the remission of my sins; for what lot have I among them that are sanctified?"

4. More especially in the time of sickness and pain, he will press this with all his might: "Is it not the word of Him that cannot lie, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord?' But you are not holy; you know it well; you know holiness is the full image of God; and how far is this above, out of your sight? You cannot attain unto it. Therefore, all your labour has been in vain. All these things you have suffered in vain. You have spent your strength for nought. You are yet in your sins, and must therefore perish at the last." And thus, if your eye be not steadily fixed on Him who hath borne all your sins, he will bring you again under that "fear of death," whereby you was so long "subject unto bondage," and, by this means, impair, if not wholly destroy, your peace, as well as joy in the Lord.

5. But his masterpiece of subtilty is still behind. Not content to strike at your peace and joy, he will carry his attempts farther yet: he will level his assault against your righteousness also. He will endeavour to shake, yea, if it be possible, to destroy, the holiness you have already received, by your very expectation of receiving more, of attaining all the image of God.

6. The manner wherein he attempts this, may partly appear from what has been already observed. For, first, by striking at our joy in the Lord, he strikes likewise at our holiness: seeing joy in the Holy Ghost is a precious means of promoting every holy temper; a choice instrument of God, whereby He carries on much of His work in a believing soul. And it is a considerable help, not only to inward, but also to outward, holiness. It strengthens our hands to go on in the work of faith, and in the labour of love; manfully to "fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life." It

is peculiarly designed of God to be a balance both against inward and outward sufferings; to "lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees." Consequently, whatever damps our joy in the Lord, proportionably obstructs our holiness. And therefore, so far as Satan shakes our joy, he hinders our holiness also.

7. The same effect will ensue, if he can, by any means, either destroy or shake our peace. For the peace of God is another precious means of advancing the image of God in us. There is scarce a greater help to holiness than this, a continual tranquillity of spirit, the evenness of a mind stayed upon God, a calm repose in the blood of Jesus. And without this, it is scarce possible to "grow in grace," and in the vital "knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." For all fear (unless the tender, filial fear) freezes and benumbs the soul. It binds up all the springs of spiritual life, and stops all motion of the heart toward God. And doubt, as it were, bemires the soul, so that it sticks fast in the deep clay. Therefore, in the same proportion as either of these prevail, our growth in holiness is hindered.

8. At the same time that our wise adversary endeavours to make our conviction of the necessity of perfect love an occasion of shaking our peace by doubts, and fears, he endeavours to weaken, if not destroy, our faith. Indeed these are inseparably connected, so that they must stand or fall together. So long as faith subsists, we remain in peace; our heart stands fast, while it believes in the Lord. But if we let go our faith, our filial confidence in a loving, pardoning God, our peace is at an end, the very foundation on which it stood being overthrown. And this is the only foundation of holiness, as well as of peace; consequently, whatever strikes at this, strikes at the very root of all holiness: for without this faith, without an abiding sense that Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me, without a continuing conviction that God for Christ's sake is merciful to me a sinner, it is impossible that I should love God: "We love Him, because He first loved us;" and in proportion to the strength and clearness of our conviction that He hath loved us, and ac-

cepted us in His Son. And unless we love God, it is not possible that we should love our neighbour as ourselves; nor, consequently, that we should have any right affections, either toward God, or toward man. It evidently follows, that whatever weakens our faith, must, in the same degree, obstruct our holiness: and this is not only the most effectual, but also the most compendious way of destroying all holiness; seeing it does not affect any one Christian temper, any single grace or fruit of the Spirit, but, so far as it succeeds, tears up the very root of the whole work of God.

9. No marvel, therefore, that the ruler of the darkness of this world should here put forth all his strength. And so we find by experience. For it is far easier to conceive, than it is to express, the unspeakable violence wherewith this temptation is frequently urged on them who hunger and thirst after righteousness. When they see, in a strong and clear light, on the one hand, the desperate wickedness of their own hearts,—on the other hand, the unspotted holiness to which they are called in Christ Jesus; on the one hand, the depth of their own corruption, of their total alienation from God,—on the other, the height of the Glory of God, that image of the Holy One, wherein they are to be renewed; there is, many times, no spirit left in them; they could almost cry out, "With God this is impossible!" They are ready to give up both faith and hope; to cast away that very confidence, whereby they are to overcome all things, through Christ strengthening them; whereby, "after they have done the will of God," they are to "receive the promise."

10. And if they "hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end," they shall undoubtedly receive the promise of God, reaching through both time and eternity. But here is another snare laid for our feet: while we earnestly pant for that part of the promise which is to be accomplished here, "for the glorious liberty of the children of God," we may be lead unawares from the consideration of the glory which shall hereafter be revealed. Our eye may be insensibly turned aside from that crown which the righteous Judge hath promised to give at that day "to all that love His appearing;"

and we may be drawn away from the view of that incorruptible inheritance which is reserved in heaven for us. But this also would be a loss to our souls, and an obstruction to our holiness. For to walk in the continual sight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is set before us. This it was, the having "respect unto the recompence of the reward," which, of old time, encouraged Moses, rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Nay, it is expressly said of a greater than he, that "for the joy that was set before Him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame," till He "sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Whence we may easily infer, how much more needful for us is the view of that joy set before us, that we may endure whatever cross the wisdom of God lays upon us, and press on through holiness to glory.

11. But while we are reaching to this, as well as to that glorious liberty which is preparatory to it, we may be in danger of falling into another snare of the devil, wherein he labours to entangle the children of God. We may take too much thought for to-morrow, so as to neglect the improvement of to-day. We may so expect perfect love, as not to use that which is already shed abroad in our hearts. There have not been wanting instances of those who have greatly suffered hereby. They were so taken up with what they were to receive hereafter, as utterly to neglect what they had already received. In expectation of having five talents more, they buried their one talent in the earth. At least, they did not improve it as they might have done, to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls.

12. Thus does the subtle adversary of God and man endeavour to make void the counsel of God, by dividing the Gospel against itself, and making one part of it overthrow the other; while the first work of God in the soul is destroyed by the expectation of His perfect work. We have seen several of the ways wherein he attempts this, by cutting off, as it were, the springs of holiness. But this he likewise

does more directly, by making that blessed hope an occasion of unholy tempers.

13. Thus, whenever our heart is eagerly athirst for all the great and precious promises; when we pant after the fulness of God, as the hart after the water-brook; when our soul breaketh out in fervent desire, "Why are His chariot-wheels so long a-coming?"—he will not neglect the opportunity of tempting us to murmur against God. He will use all his wisdom, and all his strength, if haply, in an unguarded hour, we may be influenced to repine at our Lord for thus delaying His coming. At least, he will labour to excite some degree of fretfulness or impatience; and, perhaps, of envy at those whom we believe to have already attained the prize of our high calling. He well knows, that, by giving way to any of these tempers, we are pulling down the very thing we would build up. By *thus* following after perfect holiness, we become more unholy than before. Yea, there is great danger that our last state should be worse than the first; like them of whom the Apostle speaks in those dreadful words, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."

14. And from hence he hopes to reap another advantage, even to bring up an evil report of the good way. He is sensible, how few are able to distinguish (and too many are not willing so to do) between the accidental abuse, and the natural tendency, of a doctrine. These, therefore, will he continually blend together, with regard to the doctrine of Christian perfection; in order to prejudice the minds of unwary men against the glorious promises of God. And how frequently, how generally, I had almost said how universally, has he prevailed herein! For who is there that observes any of these accidental ill effects of this doctrine, and does not immediately conclude, this is its natural tendency; and does not readily cry out, "See, these are the fruits (meaning the natural, necessary fruits) of such doctrine?" Not so: they are fruits which may accidentally spring from the abuse of a great and precious truth: but

the abuse of this, or any other scriptural doctrine, does by no means destroy its use. Neither can the unfaithfulness of man, perverting his right way, make the promise of God of no effect. No: let God be true, and every man a liar. The word of the Lord, it shall stand. "Faithful is He that hath promised: He also will do it." Let not us then be "removed from the hope of the Gospel." Rather let us observe, which was the second thing proposed, how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked one; how we may rise the higher by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

II. 1. And, first, does Satan endeavour to damp your joy in the Lord, by the consideration of your sinfulness; added to this, that without entire, universal holiness, no man can see the Lord? You may cast back this dart upon his own head, while, through the grace of God, the more you feel of your own vileness, the more you rejoice in confident hope, that all this shall be done away. While you hold fast this hope, every evil temper you feel, though you hate it with a perfect hatred, may be a means, not of lessening your humble joy, but rather of increasing it. "This and this," may you say, "shall likewise perish from the presence of the Lord. Like as the wax melteth at the fire, so shall this melt away before His face." By this means, the greater that change is which remains to be wrought in your soul, the more you may triumph in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of your salvation, who hath done so great things for you already, and will do so much greater things than these.

2. Secondly: the more vehemently he assaults your peace with that suggestion; "God is holy; you are unholy; you are immensely distant from that holiness without which you cannot see God: how then can you be in the favour of God? How can you fancy you are justified?"—take the more earnest heed to hold fast that, "Not by works of righteousness which I have done, I am found in Him; I am accepted in the Beloved, not having my own righteousness, (as the cause, either in whole or in part, of our justification before God,) but that which is by faith in Christ, the righteousness

which is of God by faith." O bind this about your neck: write it upon the table of thy heart. Wear it as a bracelet upon thy arm, as frontlets between thine eyes: "I am justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Value and esteem, more and more, that precious truth, "By grace we are saved through faith." Admire, more and more, the free grace of God, in so loving the world as to give "His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." So shall the sense of the sinfulness you feel, on the one hand, and of the holiness you expect, on the other, both contribute to establish your peace, and to make it flow as a river. So shall that peace flow on with an even stream, in spite of all those mountains of ungodliness, which shall become a plain in the day when the Lord cometh to take full possession of your heart. Neither will sickness, or pain, or the approach of death occasion any doubt or fear. You know a day, an hour, a moment, with God, is as a thousand years. He cannot be straitened for time wherein to work whatever remains to be done in your soul. And God's time is always the best time. Therefore be thou careful for nothing: only make thy requests known unto Him, and that, not with doubt or fear, but thanksgiving; as being previously assured, He cannot withhold from thee any manner of thing that is good.

3. Thirdly: the more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in His love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that whereunto you have attained; so much the more labour to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Never let that slip, "I have 'an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;' and, 'The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'" Be this thy glory, and crown of rejoicing; and see that no one take thy crown. Hold that fast: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:" and, "I now 'have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.'" Thus, being filled with all peace and joy in believing, press

on, in the peace and joy of faith, to the renewal of thy whole soul in the image of Him that created thee! Meanwhile, cry continually to God, that thou mayest see that prize of thy high calling, not as Satan represents it, in a horrid, dreadful shape, but in its genuine, native beauty; not as something that must be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what may be, to lead thee to heaven. Look upon it as the most desirable gift which is in all the stores of the rich mercies of God. Beholding it in this true point of light, thou wilt hunger after it more and more; thy whole soul will be athirst for God, and for this glorious conformity to His likeness; and, having received a good hope of this, and strong consolation through grace, thou wilt no more be weary or faint in thy mind, but wilt follow on till thou attainest.

4. In the same power of faith, press on to glory. Indeed, this is the same prospect still. God hath joined from the beginning, pardon, holiness, heaven. And why should man put them asunder? O beware of this! Let not one link of the golden chain be broken. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven me. He is now renewing me in His own image. Shortly He will make me meet for Himself, and take me to stand before His face. I, whom He hath justified through the blood of His Son, being thoroughly sanctified by His Spirit, shall quickly ascend to the 'New Jerusalem, the city of the living God.' Yet a little while and I shall 'come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.' How soon will these shadows flee away, and the day of eternity dawn upon me. How soon shall I drink of 'the river of the water of life, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb! There all His servants shall praise Him, and shall see His face, and His name shall be upon their foreheads. And no night shall be there; and they have no need of a candle, or the light of the sun. For the Lord God enlighteneth them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.'"

5. And if you thus "taste of the good word, and of the powers of the world to come," you will not murmur against God, because you are not yet "meet for the inheritance of the

saints in light." Instead of repining at your not being wholly delivered, you will praise God for thus far delivering you. You will magnify God for what He hath done, and take it as an earnest of what He will do. You will not fret against Him, because you are not yet renewed, but bless Him because you shall be; and because "now is your salvation" from all sin "nearer than when you" first "believed." Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, knowing that it "will come, and will not tarry." You may therefore the more cheerfully endure, as yet, the burden of sin that still remains in you, because it will not always remain. Yet a little while, and it shall be clean gone. Only "tarry thou the Lord's leisure:" be strong, and "He shall comfort thy heart;" and put thou thy trust in the Lord!

6. And if you see any who appear (so far as man can judge, but God alone searcheth the hearts) to be already partakers of their hope, already "made perfect in love;" far from envying the grace of God in them, let it rejoice and comfort your heart. Glorify God for their sake! "If one member is honoured," shall not "all the members rejoice with it?" Instead of jealousy or evil surmising concerning them, praise God for the consolation! Rejoice in having a fresh proof of the faithfulness of God, in fulfilling all His promises; and stir yourself up the more to "apprehend that for which you are also apprehended of Christ Jesus!"

7. In order to this, redeem the time. Improve the present moment. Buy up every opportunity of growing in grace, or of doing good. Let not the thought of receiving more grace to-morrow, make you negligent of to-day. You have one talent now: if you expect five more, so much the rather improve that you have. And the more you expect to receive hereafter, the more labour for God now. Sufficient for the day is the grace thereof. God is now pouring His benefits upon you: now approve yourself a faithful steward of the present grace of God. Whatever may be to-morrow, give all diligence to-day to "add to your faith courage, temperance, patience, brotherly-kindness," and the fear of God, till you

attain that pure and perfect love! Let these things be now "in you, and abound!" Be not now slothful or unfruitful: 'so shall an entrance be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

8. Lastly: if in time past you have abused this blessed hope of being holy as He is holy, yet do not therefore cast it away. Let the abuse cease, the use remain. Use it now to the more abundant glory of God, and profit of your own soul. In steadfast faith, in calm tranquillity of spirit, in full assurance of hope, rejoicing evermore for what God hath done, press ye on unto perfection! Daily growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and going on from strength to strength, in resignation, in patience, in humble thankfulness for what ye have attained, and for what ye shall, run the race set before you, "looking unto Jesus," till, through perfect love, ye enter into His glory!

Which of Satan's devices are most hindering to the pursuit of holiness?

"Satan attempts to destroy the *first* work of God in the soul, or at least to hinder its increase, *by our expectation of that greater work*," etc.—SEC. I. 1, 2.

In what way does Satan press this assault upon the believer's peace?

"He will not cease to urge: 'But the tree is known by its fruits,'" etc.—SEC. I. 3.

At what seasons does Satan especially urge this temptation?

"In the time of sickness and pain," etc.—SEC. I. 4.

What is Satan's masterpiece of subtlety?

"Not content to strike at your peace and joy, he will . . . level his assault against your *righteousness* also," etc—SEC. I. 5, 6.

In what way does joy advance holiness?

See SEC. I. 6.

How does peace advance holiness?

Ibid.

What is the effect of slavish fear?

"All fear (unless the tender filial fear) freezes and benumbs the soul," etc.—SEC. I. 7

What Christian grace does Satan next attack?

"He endeavours to weaken, if not destroy, our *faith*," etc.—SEC. I. 8.

What is the next fortress of a believer's privilege that Satan strives to undermine?

"*Hope* of the glory which shall hereafter be revealed."—SEC. I. 10.

Into what other mistake does Satan strive to entrap the believer?

"We may so expect *perfect* love, as not to use the love already shed abroad in our hearts."—SEC. I. 11.

When are we most liable to be taken in this snare?

"Whenever our heart is eagerly athirst for all the great and precious promises," etc.—SEC. I. 13.

How may we "*resist* these fiery darts of the wicked one"?

See SEC. II. 1, 2.

What is the true evangelical light in which Christian perfection is to be regarded?

"Not [redacted] something that must be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what may be to lead thee to heaven." "Instead of repining that you are not wholly delivered, praise God for thus far delivering you."

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